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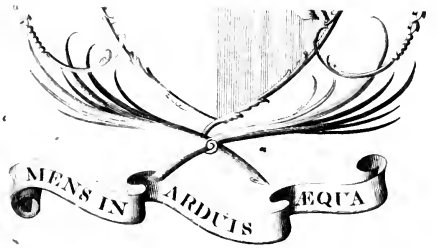

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SEVERAL

DISCOURSES

Concerning the

Terms of Acceptance

WITH

GOD.

IN WHICH

I. The Terms themſelves are diſtinctly laid down; as they are propoſed to Chriſtians in the New Teſtament. And

II. Several falſe Notions of the Conditions of Salvation are conſidered.

PARTICULARLY

Of being ſaved by Faith.
Of truſting to External Performances.
Of the Power of Charity to cover Sins.
Of relying upon the Merits of Chriſt.
Of Man's Weakneſs, and God's Grace.
Of Repentance.
Of the Example of the Thief on the Croſs.
Of truſting to a Death-bed Sorrow.
Of the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard.
Of depending upon Amendment in time to come.

By BENJAMIN HOADLY, *M. A.* Rector of St. *Peter's Poor* (now Lord Biſhop of *Wincheſter.*)

The FOURTH EDITION.

LONDON:

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TO THE

HONOURED

Mrs. *HOWLAND*,

OF

STREATHAM in SURRY,

These SERMONS (as a Publick Testimony of the Sincerest GRATITUDE and Highest RESPECT,) are most humbly Dedicated

By Her most obliged

AND

most obedient Servant,

BENJ. HOADLY.

THE

PREFACE.

TO THE

PARISHIONERS

OF

St. Peter's Poor, *London.*

THE *following* Sermons *were firſt Framed, and then Preached, with a ſincere Deſign of fixing in your Minds ſuch Notions of Religion,*

and of the Terms of Salvation, as might be the Foundation of a regular Courſe of Holineſs here, and of an eternal State of Happineſs hereafter. And they are now Publiſhed, in order to carry forward more extenſively the ſame good End.

It hath been long my Opinion, that the Bad Lives of Chriſtians are not owing ſo much to their Ignorance of what is truly Evil, and Sinful, as to a certain ſecret Hope of God's Favour, built upon ſomething ſeparated from the conſtant Practiſe of all that is Virtuous and Praiſeworthy. This made me chuſe to ſpend ſome time in eſtabliſhing, after the moſt unexceptionable manner, the true Grounds upon which only it is reaſonable to build our Expectations

of

of Happineſs; and in demonſtrating the great Danger and Weakneſs of depending on any other Methods. My chief Study hath been to do this, not only by the moſt convincing Arguments, but with the greateſt Plainneſs of Expreſſion: having had no other View, either in the Choice, or Proſecution, of this Deſign, but that of being uſeful, in a Matter of the higheſt Importance. And if theſe Sermons *ſhall, through God's Bleſſing, either awaken, or confirm, in any Chriſtians, a true Senſe of Religion, and of the great Deſign of Chriſtianity; I ſhall have a Satisfaction within, hardly to be expreſſed in Words.*

I have made them of ſuch a Length, that any one of them may

be read, either in the Family, or the Cloſet, within the compaſs of half an Hour. And becauſe they will moſt probably, as they are deſigned, be read, every one, ſingly in it's Order; I have therefore endeavoured rather to make, than to avoid, the Repetition of ſuch things, as either are of ſo great importance, as to be equally Neceſſary on ſeveral Occaſions; or ſerve to make every Diſcourſe, by it ſelf, the more complete and uſeful.

I am very ſenſible of the Obligations I lie under, to contribute my utmoſt towards your right Underſtanding, and conſcientious Practice, of true Religion. It hath pleaſed God, by a particular Providence, to make my Power to ſerve you much

much leſs than my Will: nor am I inſenſible of my many Imperfections in the diſcharge of thoſe parts of my Office which I am ſtill able to perform. But of this *you your ſelves are Witneſſes*; (*and theſe* Sermons *will be ſome Teſtimony of it to the World*;) *that the Points which I have chiefly, I may ſay conſtantly, inculcated upon you from the Pulpit, have been the great, undiſputed, Duties of the Goſpel, and the indiſpenſable Neceſſity of an Holy Life. You ſee, I would willingly find out ſomething that might atone a little for my Defects in other parts of my Office: and I can think of nothing better than this, that* I have carefully endeavoured to point out to you the true way to Heaven. *Nor can I*

poſſibly

poſſibly give you a greater Demonſtration than this, *how truly I deſire your Happineſs; and how ſincerely I am*

Your Faithful Friend,

and Servant,

BENJ. HOADLY.

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Concerning

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON I.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verſe.

Maſter, What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life ?

THIS is the Enquiry of one of the Students and Interpreters of the *Law* of *Moſes* : who, hearing of our Lord's Behaviour, and Pretenſions to ſo great a Character as that of the *Meſſiah* ſent by God to inſtruct Mankind in the right way to Happineſs, came, amongſt others, either out of Curioſity, or ſome worſe Principle, to try what Anſwer he would give to ſo important a Queſtion as this in the Text, *What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life ?* i. e. What are the great points

SERM. I.

SERM. I. of Practice, which can recommend me, who am a *Jew*, and adhere to the *Law* of *Moſes*, to the Favour of God? For by our Lord's Anſwer it is plain, that this *Queſtion* related to the chief practical Duties of Religion; and that it was not our Lord's Deſign to give the *Enquirer* a particular Account of the Conditions of Juſtification, and Terms of Acceptance, which *He*, and his *Apoſtles*, were in due time to lay open to the World. He appeals, We ſee, to the *Enquirer* himſelf, what the great Precepts of the *Law* were; and afterwards declares that an exact obſervance of thoſe two comprehenſive Duties, of loving God, and our Neighbour, would entitle him to *eternal Life*: Duties, ſo comprehenſive indeed, that to them may be reduced all that is good in any Religion in the World, and all that can poſſibly render us acceptable to God. But though this ſummary Declaration anſwered well our bleſſed Lord's Purpoſe at that time, as it was a ſufficient Reply to the preſent Enquirer: yet it was the great buſineſs of his Divine Miſſion to enter more particularly into this *grand Debate*; to promulgate to the World more expreſly, and

and more fully, thoſe *Terms* and *Conditions*, upon which Almighty God, for the ſake of what he undertook to do and ſuffer in this World, will accept Mankind, and make thoſe happy, who cannot pretend to a ſinleſs and perfect Obedience to his Laws, but ſtand conſcious to themſelves of many paſt Tranſgreſſions of them. Since therefore, this was the profeſſed buſineſs of *Him*, in whom we believe: it becomes us all, if we have any thoughts of Happineſs, to addreſs our ſelves to the ſame Perſon, with a very ſerious Curioſity; and to enquire what it is that is expected at our Hands, in order to our Juſtification, and final Acquittance from the guilt of our Sins, at the great Day. This is the *Enquiry* which is of the utmoſt importance to us. SERM. I.

BUT it will be proper here to obſerve, that, with reſpect to ſuch as have been educated in any other falſe *Religion*, or *Worſhip*, and have contracted the guilt of many Sins, the firſt part of the *Enquiry*, and of the *Anſwer* to it, will be ſomewhat different from what it muſt be, with reſpect to ſuch as have been educated in the knowledge and belief of *Chriſtianity*, and taken the

SERM. I. Profeſſion of it upon themſelves; and after that contracted the guilt of wilful Sins: as may appear to any who ſeriouſly conſult the *New Teſtament*. For the *firſt Enquiry* there made by ſuch as were at any time touched to the Heart, and uneaſy under the conſciouſneſs of their former Sins, was, how they ſhould be ſaved from this guilt which they had already contracted; or what they ſhould do to be acquitted from theſe Sins committed in their former State. And the *Anſwer* we find was, that their receiving Chriſt for their Maſter; their firſt Faith, and believing in him, ſhould have that Efficacy with Almighty God, that all their paſt Sins, committed before this *Faith*, ſhould be cancelled; and *they* looked upon as juſt perſons, with reſpect to all that was paſt.

THIS matter of the *Heathen* and *Jewiſh* World being juſtified, or acquitted from all paſt guilt, by their *Faith*, or belief in Jeſus Chriſt, having been ſtrenuouſly aſſerted, and fully expreſſed by the *Apoſtles*, and eſpecially St. *Paul*; many weak and unſtable Men have built ſuch Notions upon this, as have been, and may be, of pernicious conſequence

conſequence to *Chriſtians*, under the Goſ- SERM.
pel-State, and after they have receiv'd and I.
profeſſed this *Faith* in *Chriſt:* arguing as if a ſtrong *Faith* or *Confidence* in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and his Merits, would do all; acquit from all Sins; and render the wicked Chriſtian ſpotleſs at laſt; and preſent him blameleſs before the Throne of God. Whereas it is manifeſt that, after this *firſt Juſtification*, and acquittance, was obtained by means of believing in Jeſus Chriſt; this very believing, or *Faith*, brought the Believer under the moſt ſtrict Obligations imaginable; more in Number, and ſeverer in their Nature, than the Man was under before; and theſe bound upon him under the penalty of God's eternal Diſpleaſure. This is as plain in the *New Teſtament*, as Words can make it. But of this *Juſtification* which profeſſed *Chriſtians* expect at any time to be wrought for them by *Faith*, or *Confidence* only, I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more in the farther proſecution of my preſent Deſign. At preſent I will only obſerve to you, that when it is enquired in the *New Teſtament*, *what ſhall we do to be ſaved?* and when it is anſwered to

SERM. I. the *Enquirers*, or laid down, that *to believe* and *to be baptized*, or that *Faith* will ſave them, or the like; it is only meant, that they who do not believe already ſhall be acquitted from their paſt Sins, or ſaved from the Guilt of them, by believing, and coming into the *Terms* required by the *Goſpel*; or that the firſt ſtep to their Salvation, and that which will put them into a ſafe way, is *Faith*, or taking *Chriſt* for their Maſter, and being entered into his Religion. Or elſe, *Faith* is taken for the whole *Goſpel-method*; for the whole of what is required in *that*: and ſo, it is the intent of theſe Expreſſions to ſignifie that it is this method which only can ſave them; not the *Law* of *Moſes*, or the Inſtitutions of the *Heathen* World, in which they had before been educated. And it is plain that all this related to ſuch only as had not before profeſſed, or taken upon themſelves, the belief of the *Goſpel*; and toucheth not the *Caſe* in which we are concerned, who have been educated in this belief, or long profeſſed it. *Chriſtians* of later Ages are generally of this ſort: and it is their own caſe and condition, not that of others, about

about which their *Enquiry* ought to be; and which it concerns the *Miniſters* of the Goſpel principally to conſider. SERM. I.

THIS is my Deſign; and what I propoſe to do as fully as I can: as well by laying down *poſitively* what is the true anſwer to this *Enquiry*; as by conſidering and refuting thoſe falſe *Anſwers* which Men have framed to themſelves, from their own vain Wiſhes, fortified with ſome miſtaken and miſapplied Paſſages in the Word of God. But, before I come to the main Deſign, it is very expedient,

I. TO propoſe diſtinctly what the great *Queſtion*, and *Enquiry* is, which concerns *Us*, who have taken upon our ſelves the profeſſion of the *Chriſtian Religion*; and continue in that Profeſſion: that ſo the *Anſwer* to it may be the better underſtood.

II. TO conſider the great importance of this *Enquiry*; and the hazard of miſtaking in it: that we may be the more ſolicitous to find out the only true account of this matter; and the more guarded againſt any Deceit and Deluſion in a buſineſs of ſuch moment.

SERM. I. III. To ſhew the only method of coming to a true Reſolution of this *Queſtion*; and where it is that we may expect ſuch an account of this Affair, as we may ſafely, and ſecurely, depend upon. Now,

I. THE great *Enquiry*, in which we are concerned, is this, What it is that the *Goſpel* requires of Men, who believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and profeſs his *Faith*, and own him for their *Maſter*; in order to their acquittance from the puniſhment of any wilful Sins, which they have at any time committed, during their profeſſion of his Religion; and to their final Juſtification before God at the Day of Judgment; and to their eternal Happineſs after this.

That many *Chriſtians* do fall into great and wilful Sins after their *Baptiſm*; after their knowledge of the Truth; and after they have taken upon themſelves the profeſſion of their moſt holy Religion; is matter of daily Obſervation, and of daily Experience. That the very beſt have not, in every part of their paſt Lives, done exactly what they know they ought to have done; that, in ſome paſt Inſtances or other, of Thought, Word, or Deed, they have had experience

experience of ſome ſudden Paſſion, or ſome latent Weakneſs, which, by a greater degree of conſtant Watchfulneſs, might have been prevented; is likewiſe evident: and by themſelves always made matter of Confeſſion and Humiliation. That there is a method of Reconciliation propoſed in the *Goſpel* to both theſe ſorts of *Chriſtians*; and *Terms* laid down in it, on which *Chriſtian Sinners*, if I may ſo ſpeak, ſhall be accepted and acquitted, is plain from many Exhortations in the *New Teſtament* to ſuch Chriſtians as had ſinned; and from the Behaviour of the *Apoſtles* with reſpect to ſuch; as well as from the Abſurdities following from the contrary Suppoſition: which would render the *Goſpel* a moſt ineffectual Inſtitution, debarring every individual profeſſor of it, upon one ſingle, ſudden, wilful Tranſgreſſion, from all future Hopes of Happineſs; (and *who then can be ſaved?*) or a moſt pernicious Inſtitution, turning every *Chriſtian* into a deſperate Sinner, by allowing no Hopes of any benefit from his recovering himſelf. SERM. I.

BUT whatever *Terms*, or *Conditions* are allowed us, after relapſe into Sin, or continuance

SERM. I.

tinuance in it, we know they are granted, for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*; in conſideration of what he did and ſuffered for this very purpoſe, that theſe *Terms* and *Conditions* might be granted to *Chriſtians*. This therefore, I ſay, is the *Queſtion* about which our greateſt Concern is to be employed, What thoſe *Terms* and *Conditions* are, on which, for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, God will acquit us of our Sins, and at laſt make us eternally happy. For tho' it be for the ſake of *Chriſt*, that he will do this at all; yet he expects ſomething at our own Hands: And it is upon ſuch and ſuch Conditions only, that for *his ſake* He will accept us; without the performance of which He leaves us no room to hope for any Benefit from the Merits of *Chriſt*. All that *Chriſt* has done, and ſuffered, for our ſakes, was only in order to the ſettling theſe *Conditions*: but what We are to do, according to this *Treaty* and *Compact*, in which he is the *Mediator*; This belongs to us chiefly to enquire after.

II. The importance of this *Enquiry* plainly appears from the account of it, which I have now given. Our acceptance with God;

God ; our Juſtification ; our acquittance from the guilt of our Sins ; our final and eternal Happineſs, depend entirely upon our due Apprehenſions, and effectual Senſe, of this matter. If we employ our Minds ſeriouſly about it ; and come to ſettle in them true Notions, and a juſt account of it: it will be the Fountain of all Happineſs to us; by being the Foundation of ſuch a Practice, and ſuch a Conduct of our Lives, as will end in Glory, and Peace for ever. And the importance of it is enlarged, and heighten'd, when we conſider the vaſt and unſpeakable Danger of miſtaking in this *grand Enquiry* ; that if we do, through Prejudice, or Paſſion, or love to this World, or fondneſs for carnal Pleaſure, entertain wrong Notions of this Affair, they will lead us into a wrong method of Action, and conclude us at laſt under inexpreſſible Miſery : the Miſery, not only of deprivation, or being debarred from the Happpineſs of Heaven, and the Communications of God's Favour ; but that of enduring poſitive Torments, the Wrath of God, and the Puniſhments threatned by his *Son* in the *Goſpel.* The Conſideration of this made our Lord SERM. I.

ſo

SERM. I. so earneſt to free the Minds of Men from all falſe Surmiſes about the great buſineſs upon which he came into the World; that neither *Unbelievers*, nor *Believers*, might miſtake his Errand. The conſideration of this made the *Apoſtles*, and particularly St. *Paul*, ſo frequent in their Warnings againſt all Inclination to be *deceived* in this matter: well knowing that *Chriſtians*, even in thoſe firſt Days, were in great danger, from the inward Motions of their own Luſts and Paſſions, and the outward Hardſhips of *Perſecution*, to be miſled by ſuch falſe *Apoſtles*, and falſe *Teachers*, as would ſooth their preſent Inclinations, and flatter them into vain and deluſive Hopes.

LET not therefore any thing either within us, or without us; let not any thing of this World; (Profit, or Honour, or Pleaſure,) lay a Biaſs upon our Minds in this *Enquiry*. Neither Profit, nor Honour, nor Pleaſure can, in the leaſt avail us, when we have made the fatal miſtake: nor can any preſent Gratification countervail the loſs of all Happineſs to all Eternity. What therefore can induce us to be ſo careleſs, or ſo weak, as to be willingly impoſed upon in a *Queſti-*

a *Queſtion*, upon the juſt Reſolution of which *Eternity* depends; and the falſe account of which, once permitted to enter into our Minds, muſt draw after it more Miſery, and Unhappineſs than we can now conceive? Since therefore it is an Enquiry of ſuch vaſt, and unſpeakable importance; let us SERM. I.

III. Conſider the true Method of coming to a Reſolution of this *grand Queſtion*; and where it is that we may expect ſuch an Account of this Affair, as we may ſafely and ſecurely depend upon. Now it being a Matter of infinite Grace and Mercy that Almighty God will enter into any *Treaty* at all with a ſinful World; or come to any *Terms* with his rebellious Subjects: it is very evident that the Perſons immediately commiſſion'd by him, or by the *Perſon* whom he ſent into this World upon ſo good an Account, are thoſe only, on whom we can ſafely and with Honour rely in this Affair. It depended on his Will, to make the *Conditions* what he ſhould think agreeable to his own unalterable Perfections, and to the eternal and unvariable Nature of Juſt and Right. To promulgate theſe Conditi-

ons,

SERM. I. tions, and to give an Account of these *Terms*, He sent *Jesus Christ* into the World: who in his Life-time did it, as fully as was requisite to his present Design; and, for the same End, immediately commission'd his *Apostles* to preach the glad Tidings to the whole World, and to lay open more fully these Terms; and conducted them by an infallible Spirit, to secure them from all Error in this Matter. Whither then should we go but to him: for *he hath the Words of Eternal Life?* and to his *Apostles:* for they were the *immediate Embassadors* of Christ, *beseeching us to be reconcil'd to God*, and preaching the *Conditions* of this Reconciliation? It is in the *Preachings* of Christ himself, and in the Writings of these *Apostles*, that we can securely hope to find the only Account of this Enquiry that will avail us any thing.

As for our selves, and all others, who succeed in teaching, and feeding the Flock of *Christ*; we cannot pretend to any *new Revelations*. It is our Business only to explain the *old*; to convince Men of any Errors disagreeable to the written Word of God; and to lay before them, in the best manner

manner poſſible, what is contained, and propos'd in it. We cannot make the *Terms of Salvation* what we, or many others, may wiſh. They are fix'd by thoſe who only had Authority to fix them, from God, and his Holy Spirit: and we muſt not vary from thoſe who have declar'd long ago the whole Will of God. Other *Churches* may pretend to be themſelves, (conſider'd diſtinctly from the *Apoſtles* and their Doctrine,) the *Ground and Pillar of Truth*; and not only the Keepers, and Guardians of the *lively Oracles of God*: but our Church declareth the contrary, and profeſſeth to be only the *Medium*, and *Interpreter*, by which the Will of God already ſettled may be made known to the People; and openly proclaims that the *Articles* and *Terms* of *Salvation* are long ago fix'd and determin'd, in ſuch ſort, that it is an invading the Province of God himſelf to pretend to make new ones, or to alter them into what they were not, at the Beginning of the *Goſpel*. Let that *Unchriſtian Church*, therefore, anſwer for it, that debars the People from conſulting thoſe Books which alone are able to *make them wiſe unto Salvation*; and impoſeth upon them

SERM. I.

SERM. I. them Traditions and Cuſtoms, and Doctrines of her own, which make void the Will of God, and render ineffectual all his gracious Offers of Salvation to the World; that hides the true Word of God from all Communication with the Light; and teacheth thoſe who depend upon her, to ſeek Salvation, and to learn the *Terms* of it, from ſuch as impoſe what they pleaſe inſtead of them. But let any *Church* upon Earth, or any *Miniſters* of the *Goſpel*, pretend to what they pleaſe: whether they ſpeak Truth or Falſhood; whether they lighten or increaſe the burthen of theſe *Conditions*, or fix them where they ought to be; the *New Teſtament* is the Standard to which all muſt be brought to be tried; and by which it is the Duty of all to examine, whether they be truly directed, or invited aſide into paths of Darkneſs and Error.

THE great Lines of the Goſpel, and thoſe parts of it which declare the Terms of Salvation, have no obſcurity in them, but lie level to all who have capacity to underſtand what *God*, and *Salvation*, and *Happineſs*, mean. It will not therefore, in this grand Affair, be a ſufficient Apology for any,

at

at the great Day of Accounts, to ſay that they followed their *Leaders*; that they depended upon their Doctrine; and ſwallowed whatever they told them about the Will of God: becauſe the *New Teſtament* hath been tranſmitted down for their Uſe; to teach all Chriſtians what is their Duty, as well as to guide others in their Doctrine concerning it. The greateſt part of it was preached, and written, to the *Laity*: from whence it appears, That they were thought Judges of what ſo much concerned them; and that it was their buſineſs to take their Notions of the *Goſpel*, from Thoſe who were immediately ſent by God, and Chriſt, to propoſe it to the World. The utmoſt that can be ſaid for depending on any other, ſince that time, is, that it is probable, or to be hoped, that they will not deceive or miſlead us. But how weak an Excuſe will this prove, when we know that our *Eternity* depends upon it; that there are Writings which cannot deceive us; and that, if we ſeriouſly and conſtantly adviſe with them, no human Error, which doth not ariſe from any wilful Crime in our ſelves, ſhall be charged upon us? Could you not have conſulted theſe Scrip- SERM. I.

SERM. I. tures, and ſeen whether theſe things were ſo, as your *Church*, or your *Leaders*, taught you? will be a very ſufficient *Reply* to all who think to find Refuge, at laſt, in depending upon any other Authority in ſo weighty a matter. And were it not out of regard to ſome ſecular or By-end; from want of Deſire to know the Truth, or an affected unwillingneſs to alter the accuſtomed methods of Action: no one could be ſo ſenſeleſs as to depend upon the Word of any *modern Authority*; when it was in his Power to go himſelf to the *original Covenant*. No Man acts in this manner, in the Caſe of his worldly Concerns; or in any Point which may affect his *Body*, or his *Eſtate*, in this tranſitory World: and this will ſerve to condemn All who are guilty of ſo great a neglect, in a concern infinitely more weighty and important.

AND if it will not avail any at laſt, that they have depended upon the Word of any *Church*, or *Churchman*, upon Earth: much leſs will it avail them, that they have conſulted with Fleſh and Blood; and can plead the Dictates of *them* againſt the Dictates of God himſelf. And yet it is to be feared,

that many Men, in this *Queſtion*, upon which their eternal State depends, inſtead of conſulting our *Lord*, and his *Apoſtles*, what is truly required of them in order to Juſtification and Salvation, turn their Thoughts another way: and conſult their own Luſts, and Paſſions, and Tempers, and Deſigns in this World, what will be the moſt conſiſtent with them; and how far they will let them go towards a Reſolution of this *Enquiry*. But this is even to adviſe with *Satan* himſelf, and with all the Enemies of God, and of a Man's own Happineſs, what it is that Almighty God requires; and what it is that will bring him to that Happineſs, which it is *their* Deſire, he ſhould never arrive at. SERM. I.

THUS have I gone over the *three principal Points* of which I thought it proper to ſpeak, before we enter upon the *Debate* it ſelf. There are ſome other *Particulars*, which are conſequences from *theſe*: and which it is likewiſe highly uſeful for us to conſider, in order to make our *Enquiry* the more effectual, and ſucceſsful. But theſe I muſt reſerve for another opportunity.

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON II.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verſe.

Maſter, What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life?

SERM. II.

IN my former Diſcourſe I obſerved to you, that this was the curious *Enquiry* of a Student of the *Law* of *Moſes*, in order to try what Anſwer would be given to ſo important a *Queſtion*, by our bleſſed Lord, who appeared in the World with the Character of the *Meſſiah*, ſent by God into it, to inſtruct Mankind in the right way to Happineſs; though not received or acknowledged as ſuch by the Perſon who made this *Enquiry*: and that it was our Duty, and becoming our Profeſſions, who believe in

Jeſus

Jeſus Chriſt, as one ſent on ſo gracious an Errand, to make the ſame *Enquiry*, with all the ſerious Solicitude which a Buſineſs of ſo vaſt Importance requires. And, in order to proceed ſucceſsfully in the *Enquiry*, SERM. II.

1. I LAID down carefully and diſtinctly the *great Queſtion*, as it concerns us of later Ages; who are generally educated in the Knowledge, and continue long in the profeſſion of the *Chriſtian Religion*: viz. What are thoſe Terms and Conditions, which are required on our Parts; and upon which, God Almighty will, for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and of what he did and ſuffered to that End, forgive us our Sins, committed during this profeſſion of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and finally juſtify or acquit us at the great Day, and make us afterwards eternally Happy? This, I told you, is the Enquiry in which we are concerned: which it is of infinitely more importance to us to regard than any other thing in the World.

2. I URGED ſome Conſiderations proper to make us ſenſible of the great importance of this Enquiry; and the great hazard of being miſled, and miſtaken in it: and this in order to make us truly ſerious, and

SERM. II. truly ſolicitous not to be impoſed upon, in this grand Affair.

3. I SHEWED you that the only ſecure Method of proceeding, and the only ſafe way of coming to a Reſolution of this *Queſtion*, is to conſult the *New Teſtament* our ſelves, in which we have a plain and full Account of what our bleſſed Lord himſelf, and they who were immediately commiſſioned by Him, declared concerning this Matter; and that all other ways and methods are unſucceſsful, and full of Danger. But I then told you likewiſe, that, in order to our arriving at a true account of the important Queſtion now before us, there were ſome other particulars that deſerve to be carefully obſerved: and though theſe be indeed but ſo many conſequences from the forementioned Heads; yet, I cannot but think it very well worth our while diſtinctly to propoſe, and conſider them. As

1. THAT the *Terms* of *Salvation*, and *Acceptance* with *God*, are what He hath made them; and of ſo inflexible a Nature, that it is not in our Power to bend, or alter them, as we pleaſe, into what Shape, or Nature, we think fit. And this is plain: becauſe

becauſe it did not belong to us to contrive or frame them; but to the Supreme Lord of all things. It is *He*, to whom it belongs to propoſe a method of Reconciliation to his Creatures; and *He* alone, whoſe Office it is to fix the Conditions of this Reconciliation: becauſe He alone knows what is in all reſpects fitting, and agreeable to the eternal Laws of Reaſon, and Wiſdom; of which we our ſelves could not be proper and impartial Judges. *He* hath, by Virtue of his Wiſdom, Goodneſs, and Power, an undoubted Right to give us new Laws; and to lay upon us the Conditions of a *Second Covenant*, as well as of a *Firſt*: But we have no Right, either from Wiſdom, or Power, to give Laws to Him; or to fix the *Terms* proper for him to accept. SERM. II.

IF therefore he hath offered any particular Terms and Conditions, upon which he will accept us; if He hath ſent his *Son*, and his *Apoſtles* to lay open theſe *Terms*: here we muſt reſt, and remember that it is not our Buſineſs to attempt any alteration of theſe *Terms*; and that it is the moſt fruitleſs as well as arrogant Imagination to think of doing it. In vain doth any Mor-

SERM. II.

tal wiſh or deſire them to be other than what they are determin'd to be in his Will: and in vain will it be for the greateſt or wiſeſt of us all to attempt to accommodate and bend them to our *Schemes*, or our Inclinations. The *Syſtem* of *Chriſtianity* was long ago fram'd, and the *Scheme* of Salvation laid, in the Breaſt of the Almighty, as it was deſign'd in Time to appear: and this *Syſtem* hath long ago been written by the *Evangeliſts* and *Apoſtles*; and this *Scheme* hath long ago been propoſed in the *New Teſtament*, for the Benefit of all who are in a Frame and Diſpoſition of Mind capable of receiving Benefit. God hath there ſhewn us, which is the Way to the Salvation He promiſeth. If, therefore, we will arrive at his Salvation; it muſt be in the Paths which he hath mark'd out: and we muſt, indeed, either not think of going to Heaven; or we muſt go to it, in *his* Way, and not in our own.

IT is neceſſary to obſerve this, becauſe the Generality of *profeſſed Chriſtians*, tho' they have Deſire enough of being happy hereafter; yet it muſt be in their own Way: and they will not depart from their own Schemes,

Schemes, and their own Wiſhes. Nay, they ſeem to think it much more fit that God Almighty ſhould come down to *their* Terms, than that themſelves ſhould go up to *his*. The Young Man, in the Goſpel, was *not far from the Kingdom of God*, as our Lord thought: becauſe he came to Him with ſome Diſpoſition, and ſome Deſire after Happineſs. He was willing enough to be his Diſciple, and to be ſaved by him; if the *Terms* of his Diſcipleſhip and Salvation ſhould appear ſuch as he could comply with. But when he found that the *Circumſtances* of his profeſſing the *Goſpel* at that Time were ſuch, that he muſt diveſt himſelf of his large Poſſeſſions; and follow our Lord with an entire Dependence upon him for the common Neceſſaries of Life; and ſhare in common with him the Wants and Neceſſities to which He expos'd himſelf: he went away ſorrowful; griev'd to hear that he could not be made happy by Him at leſs expence, and that the Terms of his Salvation were ſo uneaſy to be comply'd with. Thus it is with many *Profeſſors* of *Chriſtianity* in later Ages. They are, in this Senſe, *not far from the Kingdom of God*, SERM. II.

SERM. II.

God, that they desire the Happiness of Christians, and of such as belong to that Kingdom: but then they are sorrowful to hear of the Terms plainly requir'd; if they don't suit their present Inclinations, and Designs. And so they either depart from our Lord; and give up all Pretenses to his Favour, and his Salvation: or else they lay hold of one Pretext or other, or alter those *Terms*; and amuse themselves with some sort of present *Peace* and Tranquillity, by making them consist and comply with their own Desires, and Wishes. Let this therefore be always remember'd, that our Fancies, or Tempers, or Desires, cannot make the *Terms* of our *Acceptance* other than what they are already; fix'd and determin'd by the *Father* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, *with whom there is no Variableness, nor shadow of turning*: who, after having view'd all Things relating to our Nature, and his own, upon the Principles of unerring Wisdom, appointed the Bounds of his own Mercy, and the Conditions of our Happiness; neither of which is it in our Power either to enlarge or diminish.

SERM. II.

NOR is it any other than egregious Folly for us to imagine that He himſelf will at laſt vary from his own Terms; and, after He hath declar'd and promulgated Rules, by which he aſſures us He will be govern'd in the Diſtribution of his Love and Favour, to flatter our ſelves that he will depart from theſe Rules, for *our Sakes*, who would not depart from our own unreaſonable Practiſes either for *his* Sake, or *our own*; and that he will adapt his Proceedings at laſt to *our* Practice, in Pity to *us*, who would not adapt our Practice to *his* Laws. And yet I know of but this one Way in which any Alteration or Abatement, or *new Modification*, of the *Covenant* of *Grace* can be hop'd for; *viz.* that God himſelf will at laſt new model it, and alter it into ſome other Form: The Weakneſs of which Imagination I ſhall have occaſion hereafter more fully to lay open. At preſent I make this Obſervation, that the *Terms* of *Acceptance* are eſtabliſh'd and unalterable; as God himſelf hath fix'd them in the Goſpel: becauſe, unleſs we be perſuaded of this, all our *Enquiries* after them will be only ſo many Speculations, and fruitleſs Searches; rather ſerving

SERM. II. ſerving to ſatisfy Curioſity, than to direct Practice. For if we entertain a Thought, that thoſe *Terms*, tho' ſolemnly ſettled, and ſolemnly promulgated, by the Son of God and his Apoſtles, may be again altered, and changed into ſomething more agreeable to us, and more conſiſtent with our Ways; the *Goſpel* can have but little, very little, effect upon our Minds, under the powerful Aſſaults of any conſiderable Temptation. Pleaſure, Honour, and Profit, will work ſtrongly upon a Mind fluctuating in uncertainty about the Conſequences of things; or made unſtable by the flattering Hope that the Conſequences at laſt may not be found ſo terrible as they are repreſented in the Goſpel. But if we be poſſeſs'd beforehand that *ſuch* are the *Terms* of *Acceptance*, as the plain Declarations of the *New Teſtament* make them; and that *ſuch* they will be found at laſt: then our ſerious Enquiries after them will have a great and powerful Influence upon our Conduct; and be of more force than the Efforts of Fleſh and Blood, or the Inſinuations of this tranſitory World. But,

2. ANOTHER

2. ANOTHER very *neceſſary Rule* to be obſerved in this important *Enquiry*, is, that all preconceived Notions of our own; all the Impreſſions of Education; all the Inclinations of Senſe; all the Influences of Temporal Intereſt, and every thing that may caſt a Cloud before our Eyes, or prevent our ſeeing or receiving the Truth, muſt be diſregarded, in compariſon of any one plain Declaration of the *New Teſtament* upon this Head. This is ſo neceſſary, that it is in vain to ſearch after any Truth; unleſs all Prejudices, and evil Habits of Thinking, or Acting, inconſiſtent with it, be laid aſide, and for the preſent diſregarded. And much more neceſſary is it in this moſt *Important Enquiry*, that our Minds ſhould lay aſide *every weight* which will incline them againſt Truth, and weigh up the contrary Balance in which that ineſtimable Jewel is tryed; that we ſhould be perfectly willing to find that *True*, which is *True*, whether we find it or no; that we ſhould be as free as poſſible from the Biaſs impreſs'd upon the Soul, by former Schemes received upon the Authority of others, or by Evil Habits built upon our own Sin and SERM. II.

SERM. II.

Folly; that we ſhould go to thoſe Books in which the Account of this is laid before us, with Hearts diſpoſed to Truth; and indifferent whether this Account ſhall be found to contradict our former Notions, and Practices, or not.

THE force of Paſſion, and Prejudice, againſt *Truth* is ſo great, that Men tolerably well skill'd in that ſort of Learning, may ſometimes be hindred from ſeeing even the plain Truth of a *Mathematical Demonſtration*, by ſome private Reſentment, and ſecret Pique againſt others: in which Science there is no complaint of indeterminate Ideas, or obſcure Expreſſion. In like manner, ſet a Man about the Enquiry we are now ſpeaking of, who hath been uſed to a way of thinking at ſecond hand; and is in love with the Notions received from others, tho' never ſo falſe: his Labours ſhall be found to tend to little, unleſs it be to ſtrain the obſcure Paſſages into a Senſe agreeable to his own Notions; whilſt the plain ones are neglected. Or, ſet a Man about this Enquiry, immerſed in this World; embarraſs'd with a ſordid love of Gain, or Honour; or captivated by Luſt, and ſenſual Pleaſure: and how

how hardly will He, if at all, receive any thing, as the Will of God, inconſiſtent with his preſent Views? What a Biaſs will his own Wiſhes, and his perverted Will, clap upon his Underſtanding? and how many Ways will He find, if He have any Thoughts of Religion at all, to reconcile the plaineſt contrary Declarations of God's Will to his own State, and his own Hopes? This makes me ſay that, if we would make the *Enquiry* with Succeſs, we muſt be willing to find that true which is ſo; and that we muſt renounce to all our own Wiſhes, or Hopes, or Deſires, whether founded upon former *Notions* infuſed into us by others; or upon former *Practices* indulged by our ſelves. SERM. II.

NAY, how weak; how unreaſonable; how injurious, and pernicious a thing is it to be otherwiſe diſpos'd? For *we* make not *Truth*: but it is what it is, and what it ever will be, whether we receive it, or not; and, when plainly propos'd to us, it is our Condemnation, if we reject it, or prefer any thing before it. And if we have been engag'd in ſuch a Habit of Sin as may incline us to one ſide more than another: the farther we go in this Way, by eſtabliſhing this

Habit

SERM. II. *Habit* of *evil Practice* by an *Error* fixed in the *Underſtanding*, we are ſo much the more deeply engaged in a Courſe of Ruine; and ſo much the more irrecoverably loſt. For by this means we go not in the Dark; but do as it were light and direct our ſelves all along the Paths of Miſery. We go ſecurely perhaps for the preſent: but at laſt the Sight and Senſe of our wilful Error will be the moſt painful Horror, and inſupportable Burthen. This ſhould engage Sinners, that have any Thoughts of finding Mercy, to break off their *evil Habits*: becauſe the longer they proceed in them, the more effectually will they blind their Eyes, and the more certainly will they indiſpoſe them, either to ſee the Truth of God's Covenant, tho' written in never ſo plain Characters; or to receive it to any purpoſe, if they ſhould not avoid the ſeeing it. For nothing unqualifies Men for *Divine Truths*, of Importance to Happineſs, ſo much as the *Habit* of *Sin*: nothing makes Men more afraid of, or unfit for, the *Light*, than their having exercis'd themſelves in the *Works of Darkneſs*.

3. ANOTHER

3. ANOTHER Particular I muſt mention, of great uſe in this Enquiry, is, that we muſt take *all* the Declarations of the New Teſtament upon this Head, into the Account; and not *ſome* only: and then that, if there be any ſeeming Variety in any of them; the more obſcure muſt be interpreted ſo as to be agreeable to the moſt plain and repeated Declarations. This it is but reaſonable to require: becauſe neither our Saviour, nor his Apoſtles, have in any one ſingle Portion of the *New Teſtament*, laid down the ſeveral Branches of the *New Covenant*; but ſpoken of them, as diſtinct Occaſions gave them Ground to do: ſometimes of one, ſometimes of another. Now all things, equally declar'd by Them to be *Conditions* of our pardon, or ſalvation, are with equal Willingneſs, and equal Regard, to be received by us. And this Rule will prevent all thoſe Miſtakes in us, which others have fatally run into, by attending to ſome ſingle Declarations upon this Subject; to the Neglect and Contradiction of others, perhaps more plain and intelligible. This will teach us that, if one Place of Scripture attributes Happineſs to SERM. II.

SERM. II. one *Virtue*, or one *Act* of the Mind; and another as plainly to another; and a third to a third; and a fourth to the Performance of the whole Will of God, without mentioning Particulars: I ſay, This will teach us not to overlook one Paſſage for the ſake of another, not more plain, or more intelligible; when *all* have the ſame Stamp of Divine Authority; and when, without regarding *all*, we cannot pretend to know the whole of what Almighty God hath declared concerning this Affair. The acting contrary to this, is juſt as if the *rebellious Subjects* of a *Prince*, now to be reſtored to his Favour upon ſuch and ſuch *Conditions*, ſhould attend only to one or two of theſe *Conditions*; and paſs over all the reſt, as if they were not of equal Importance, and had not the Sanction of the ſame Authority.

AND then, ſuppoſing there ſhould be ſome *Obſcurity* in one or more Paſſages relating to this Affair; there can be no Danger to Us, but in pretending to underſtand theſe, and at the ſame time underſtanding them ſo, as to invalidate the Deſign of the more plain and expreſs Declarations: and this out

of

of a Deſire to reconcile our own Practices to the Hopes of Happineſs. For it is no Crime in any Chriſtian, not to underſtand an obſcure or dubious Paſſage; provided he hath nothing wilful to accuſe himſelf of, in this want of Underſtanding: But the Crime is, to reſolve to underſtand it in ſuch a Senſe, as may beſt conſiſt with his falſe Hopes; tho' it conſiſts not at all with thoſe plainer Texts, about the Meaning of which there can be no Doubt. SERM. II.

LET us, therefore, but take into the Account the *Whole* of what is, in ſeveral Places of the *New Teſtament*, made neceſſary to our obtaining God's Favour, and Eternal Happineſs. And, if we meet with any thing which we do not perfectly underſtand upon this Head, let us but attend to the plain and repeated Declarations; and not preſume to neglect *them* for the ſake of thoſe which are not ſo; or to interpret thoſe which are not ſo, after ſuch a *manner* as to *contradict* thoſe which are ſo: and I dare ſay, we need not fear any Error in this great Enquiry. For the Terms abſolutely required are plainly, and frequently, expreſſed: and what is ſo, is, in every ſort of

SERM. II. Writing, allowed to explain what is not ſo; but what is not ſo is never allowed to be interpreted ſo as to contradict what is ſo. And therefore it will be unjuſtifiable and inexcuſable in any one, to lay hold on any part of the *New Teſtament*, or any *Text* in it, which is in any reſpect obſcure; and to oppoſe this to the plaineſt and moſt repeated: in order to build a *Doctrine*, or a *Scheme*, upon it, not to be reconciled to *theſe*; or perhaps abſolutely inconſiſtent with them. This is not to conſult the Honour of God: nor is it the way to find out the *Terms* of our own Happineſs.

THESE *Rules*, and *Obſervations*, which I have now laid down, are in order to your careful and exact Examination of what I deſign to ſay, when I come to lay before you the *Terms* of our *Acceptance* and *Salvation*, as they appear to me in the *New Teſtament*: to which I cannot now proceed for want of Time; but before which, it was neceſſary to commend to your Thoughts the *Conſiderations* before-mentioned; which will, I hope, be of great uſe in all your *future Enquiries* after the *Way* to *Eternal Life*. And all but little enough

nough, or rather, I fear, too little, to make the Generality of Chriſtians as ſincere in their Enquiries, and as ready to embrace the true Anſwer to them, as they ought to be. SERM. II.

AND indeed I have mentioned, and inſiſted upon, all theſe Precautions; becauſe it is *Eternal Life* we are enquiring after; and the Favour of that God, whoſe Favour is better than Life, and whoſe Diſpleaſure is infinitely worſe than Death. Were they the Concerns of this Life, that fleeth away like a Shadow, and is not to be ſtopp'd by all the Art, or all the Power of Man, about which we are enquiring; it would be of no ſuch vaſt Importance to be ſolicitous about the Matter. Let *Paſſion*, or *Pride*, or *Covetouſneſs* direct us; Let *Ambition*, or *Luſt*, blind our Eyes; an End would quickly come, when this World could have no part in us, But yet, behold the Perverſeneſs of Mankind. Were the *Enquiry* after the Pleaſures, or Riches, or Honours, of this World; had there any Perſon of great Sagacity, or uncommon Penetration, appeared in it, to direct them in the ſure Way to theſe Riches, or Pleaſures, or Honours, that muſt end with

SERM. II. this Temporal Life: how few Miſtakes ſhould we find made even by the weakeſt of Men? The *Covetous* would eaſily underſtand, and make themſelves perfect Maſters of the Way to Wealth; the *Voluptuous* would never miſs the Path of Pleaſure; nor the *Ambitious*, the Road to Preferment, and Honour, and Titles. None of *them* would truſt any Direction at ſecond hand, when they could conſult the Oracle it ſelf. None of *them* would be diverted from their Enquiry by any Impulſe contrary to that by which they profeſſed to be directed. None of *them* would hazard the Diſappointment of their main End, by relying on any thing but what was plainly propoſed by their Guide. And all of them would be Proof againſt every Attempt that could be uſed, either to deceive their Underſtandings, or to influence their Wills to contrary Ways.

BUT let it not always be ſaid, that the *Children of this World are wiſer, in their Generation*; wiſer in their Purſuits and Enquiries after Trifles and Miſery and Ruine; leſs capable of being impoſed upon; more guarded and ſecure in their Way, than the *Children of Light*, who profeſs to have nobler

nobler Things in View; a State of unchangeable Happineſs, Eternal in the Heavens, after this poor, uncertain State is at an End. If we be the *Children of Light*; if we have *Eternal Life* truly in View, and be truly inquiſitive after the *Way* that leads to it; let us conſider what *Eternal Life* is; how much it outweighs all that *this Life* can offer us; how much it exceeds all our preſent Conceptions which are formed upon very imperfect Ideas; how vaſtly it will recompenſe all the Pains, and Care, and Caution of the ſtricteſt Enquirer; how unconceivable an Happineſs muſt be contained in the Favour of God, the Supreme and Original Father of all Things: and we ſhall think no Precaution too much to ſecure us from Miſtake, whilſt we are ſeeking our Way to it; no Care ſuperfluous to defend us from the great Enemies of this *Enquiry*; no Pains, or Study, too great on our Parts, in order to be fully ſatisfied, *What we muſt do to inherit Eternal Life.* SERM. II.

To the Reſolution of which grand *Queſtion* I deſign to proceed the next Opportunity.

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON III.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verſe.

Maſter, What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life?

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THE *Enquiry* which I told you, theſe Words gave me Occaſion to propoſe, as of Importance to Perſons educated, and continuing, in the Profeſſion of the Faith of Chriſt, (in which Number we, and all of later Ages, generally are) is this: What it is that the *Goſpel* requires of Men, who believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and have been baptized into his Religion, and acknowledge Him for their Maſter, in order to their Acquittance from any Sins they have at any time been wilfully guilty of, during their *Chriſtian*

Chriſtian Profeſſion; and to their final Juſti- SERM.
fication at the Day of Judgment; and to III.
their Eternal Happineſs after this. And, having in Two ſeveral Diſcourſes endeavoured to engage your Attention, and to raiſe your Solicitude after Truth, in a Matter of ſuch unſpeakable Moment; as well as to point out to you the true Method of your coming to a well-grounded Satisfaction, (*viz.* your examining whatſoever is at any time laid before you on this Head by all the plain, and intelligible Texts in the *New Teſtament* concerning it, carefully laid together, and ſincerely compared:) I come now to a particular Reſolution of the *Queſtion* propoſed, which I think may be comprized under the four following Heads.

I. IT is required of a *Chriſtian*, who hath been a *wilful Sinner*, that he renounce, and forſake, his Sins.

II. IT is required of him, that he ſincerely, and with Perſeverance, practiſe the contrary Virtues. And tho' to *theſe Two* all other Terms may be reduced; yet it is very proper particularly to mention two more, *viz.*

III. IT is not ſufficient that the Sinner forſake the Sins of which he ſtands guilty before

SERM. III. fore God, and amend his outward Life; but he muſt entirely forgive the Offenſes, and Treſpaſſes, of others againſt himſelf: which is ſo neceſſary a Condition, that without it even thoſe Sins which he hath forſaken ſhall never be forgiven him.

IV. IN the *Caſe* of *Injuſtice*, or *Fraud*, or *Oppreſſion*; it is required of the Sinner, if he ever hope for Pardon, and Acceptance, not only that he leave off Injuſtice for the future, and act juſtly, and honeſtly; (which alone is not ſufficient;) but alſo that he make *Reſtitution*, in whatſoever Inſtances, he hath, by any ways or means, injured any one in the World.

THESE are the *four* particular *Terms*, or *Conditions*, upon which *Chriſtians*, who have been *wilful Sinners*, may hope for Acceptance; and without which the *Goſpel* gives them not the leaſt Ground for ſuch Hope. They may be all comprized in one *general Propoſition*, *viz.* That it is required of Chriſtians, who have the Guilt of any Sins upon them, to endeavour heartily, and ſincerely, for the future, to practiſe the whole Will of God, revealed in the Book of *Nature*, and the *Goſpel* of *Jeſus Chriſt*: and that

that without this honeſt, ſincere, and uni- SERM. III.
verſal Obedience, they cannot hope to be accepted, for the Sake, and upon the *Terms*, of *Jeſus Chriſt*. But it is fit to be more particular; and therefore I have choſen to ſpeak of this Matter under the *foremen-tioned Heads*: every one of which I deſign diſtinctly to conſider, *firſt*, ſhewing that they are moſt plainly required; and *then*, ſhewing the Fitneſs and Reaſonableneſs of them. And after we are fully ſatisfied concerning theſe, they will be ſo many infallible Directions to us; and prevent all fatal Miſtakes, which otherwiſe may be occaſioned by a too great Readineſs to lay hold on any obſcure, or miſinterpreted, Paſſage of Scripture, for the Support of any other Notions concerning this important Matter.

THESE are the *Points*, I ſay, which I deſign particularly to handle. But the *Enquiry* now before us, relating, as you ſee, to the *Caſe* of ſuch *profeſſed Chriſtians* as have been *wilful Sinners*, and ſo have need of other Conditions to be offered them, than that of a perfect, and unſpotted Holineſs; it will not be an uſeleſs, or improper Digreſſion, before I come to the particular handling

SERM. III. handling of the Points now laid down, to conſider, *who they are that may be called wilful Sinners*; and the ſeveral *Sorts*, and *Degrees* of ſuch as are ſo: that ſo, we may be all ſenſible that the very beſt of us may have need of ſome or other of theſe *Terms* of *Condeſcenſion* offered us thro' *Jeſus Chriſt*, and, for his Sake only, made *Terms* of *Acceptance* with God. And here, it being manifeſt that all Thoſe may juſtly be called *wilful Sinners*, who ſin, either *firſt*, againſt ſufficient Light; or *ſecondly*, againſt the Dictates of their own Conſciences to the contrary: it will be proper to ſhew *who* they are that may be ſaid thus to ſin, either againſt the *one*, or the *other*. Now,

1. ALL thoſe may be ſaid to act againſt ſufficient Light, and ſufficient Evidence to the contrary, who have fair Opportunities and Abilities of knowing their Duty; who profeſs a Religion, and live in any particular Place, or at any particular Time, in which their Duty is laid plainly before them. And here I muſt remark that not only thoſe *Sinners* who have attended to this Evidence, and been ſenſible of the Directions of this Light, may be ſaid to ſin againſt it; but ſuch

ſuch alſo, as have wilfully refuſed to give any *attention* to it, and have rejected the offers of its Direction, may equally be ſaid to ſin againſt it; becauſe they wilfully refuſe to pay any Reſpect, or Attention to it: and not only upon this account; but becauſe they act againſt the Maxims which *that* is perpetually offering to their View, and which they might, if they pleaſed, be very well acquainted with. For no *Ignorance* that is wilful, and affected; or that proceeds from a Reſolution to guard againſt better Information, and is founded upon an ill-diſpoſed Mind; can avail a Sinner any thing, or diſtinguiſh him at all from the moſt wilful of Sinners. And this ought to be remarked, becauſe many Perſons ſeem to be ſo weak, as to chuſe voluntarily not to be better inform'd, becauſe they are pretty well reſolved not to alter their bad Courſes; and then to imagine that their *Ignorance* will be a ſort of an Excuſe for their Vices. Whereas this ſort of *Ignorance* gives the Man all the *Eſſence*, and *Guilt*, of a *wilful Sinner*; nay, and makes Him a Sinner againſt that very Light and Evidence, to which He wilfully refuſeth to attend. So that, with reſpect

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SERM. III. to perſons who have profeſſed to believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and to receive Him for their Maſter, (of whom we are now particularly ſpeaking) it may be affirmed that, not only *They* ſin againſt the Light of his *Goſpel*, who, at the very time of their committing Sin, know, and are ſenſible, that the Action they are going about is condemned by his *Goſpel*; but alſo *They* who, after having profeſſed Faith in Him, are wilfully careleſs and negligent in their Enquiries after his Will; and chuſe, upon very bad Principles, rather not to know, than to know, the Rules which He hath laid down. For this, I ſay, is manifeſtly ſinning againſt the *Light* of that *Goſpel*, which they wilfully refuſe to conſult, or attend to, upon a Suſpicion that it may diſturb them in their preſent Courſe; and conſequently, upon a Reſolution of continuing in it without that Diſturbance.

THESE Two ſorts of Chriſtians therefore are *wilful Sinners:* ſuch, as ſin againſt the *Rules* of the *Goſpel*, knowing that they condemn their Practice at the very time of their ſinning; and ſuch likewiſe, as ſin againſt thoſe ſame Rules, with an *Ignorance* which proceeds

proceeds from a perverſe and deliberate Deſire of being undiſturbed in their Courſe: an Ignorance, in which they wilfully entrench themſelves, as ſome ſort of Security againſt the Guilt of Sin; but which, in truth, is as great an Aggravation of it, as can well be imagined. The Difference between theſe *Two*, is only ſuch a Difference as may be ſuppoſed between Two diſobedient Sons of the ſame Father: the *one* of which liſtens to his Will, and hears his Commands, and afterwards tranſgreſſeth them; and the *other*, whenever his Father is going to declare his Will to Him, ſtops his Ears, and refuſeth to hear his Voice, merely becauſe He is reſolved to go on in his own Way, without any Regard to his Will. And which of theſe Two is the moſt criminal, it is hard to determine: only that there ſeems more Reſolution of Diſobedience in the *latter*. Such Perſons as I have been now deſcribing, muſt not expect to be reckoned by our Saviour amongſt thoſe Servants *who know not their Maſter's Will, and ſo ſhall be beaten with fewer ſtripes* than others: for the *Servants* meant in that Saying of our *Lord*'s, are ſuch as have not the Opportunity of knowing their Maſter's Will

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SERM. III. Will ſo fully as others have; not ſuch as have the Opportunity, and wilfully refuſe to make uſe of it.

2. As there are *Two ſorts* of *Sinners*, who may be ſaid to ſin againſt *ſufficient Light*: ſo likewiſe, there are *Two ſorts* of *Sinners*, who may be ſaid to ſin againſt their own Judgments and Conſciences; and conſequently, to be *wilful Sinners*. Firſt, ſuch as, at the very time of their ſinning, perceive within themſelves ſomething which forbids that Action, and repreſents the Unreaſonableneſs of it, and the Anger of God conſequent upon it: and ſecondly, ſuch as, tho' they have by a Cuſtom of ſinning worn off all Senſe of their Duty ſo far as to ſin without any preſent Diſturbance, and Uneaſineſs of Mind, at the very time of ſinning; yet, before this habitual Practice of Vice, have often owned and acknowledged, or, during the continuance of it, do, upon many Occaſions, and in their moſt ſerious Intervals, judge and determine that the contrary Courſe of Action is truly their Duty, and what alone can entitle them to the Favour of God. Concerning the former of theſe, no one will doubt but that they ſin againſt their

their Conſciences: becauſe they are warned, and made uneaſy, by them at the very time of ſinning. And, as to the latter, I think it equally certain that they likewiſe do the ſame. For they ſin againſt that Judgment which they have heretofore often made, before an Habit of Sin had made them inſenſible; they ſin againſt their own Determinations in their moſt ſerious moments; they ſin againſt a former Judgment of their Minds, which their Reaſon and Conſideration hath never yet reverſed, or ever determined to be falſe or groundleſs; they ſin againſt that which was the Voice of their Conſcience, when they had any awake in their Minds: and conſequently, They may be truly ſaid to ſin againſt their Judgments, and Conſciences; tho', at the very time of their ſinning, they have no preſent Allarm and Diſturbance from them. SERM. III.

ALL the Difference between the *Two ſorts* of *Sinners* I have now mentioned, is the ſame that may be ſuppoſed between Two Servants of the ſame Maſter: the *One* of which having not ſhewn his Diſobedience ſo often, the Maſter ſtill attends upon him, and directs him in his Actions, hoping to keep

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him, by this means, from all bad and pernicious Practices, which nevertheleſs he ſometimes ventures upon, even under his Maſter's Eye; and the *Other* having ſhewn the ſame Diſobedience, under his Maſter's immediate Direction, more frequently, the Maſter thinks it uſeleſs any longer to attend upon Him, or to warn him againſt any particular Action. But yet, this Servant, tho' He offends not againſt his Maſter's preſent expreſs Warning to the contrary; He wilfully offends againſt all his paſt Rules, and all thoſe Directions which He hath heretofore given him. So that his Caſe is worſe than that of the *Former*, in this, that the *Former* hath not ſinned beyond the Patience of his Maſter: or ſo as to forfeit his conſtant Attendance upon him: which *He* hath done; and ſtill perſiſts in that Diſobedience. Juſt thus it is with the *Two ſorts* of Sinners now mentioned. Before an Habit of Sin hath made it otherwiſe; the Man hath generally the Remonſtrances of his Conſcience, whilſt He is thinking to venture upon any Vice. But Conſcience may at laſt be ſuppoſed to be weary of that good Office; and to find it fruitleſs to give ſo particular an Attendance upon

upon the Sinner. Yet the Sinner nevertheleſs ſins againſt it, becauſe He continues to ſin againſt all it's former Remonſtrances; againſt that Judgment and Determination which He himſelf hath formerly acknowledged to be juſt and reaſonable; and which He cannot think, or prove to be otherwiſe, even in the Heighth of his Wickedneſs. So that it is manifeſt that *He* ſins againſt his own Judgment and Conſcience, whoſe Conſcience hath heretofore ſufficiently warned Him againſt the Courſe He purſues, and ſufficiently recommended the contrary to Him; as well as *He*, whoſe Conſcience ſtill continues to do that good Office: and conſequently, that both have equally the Guilt of *wilful Sinners.* SERM. III.

THOSE profeſſed Chriſtians, therefore, who do, in any ſingle Action, or in any Courſe of Actions, tranſgreſs thoſe Rules, which they know to be laid down in the *Goſpel*; and they alſo, who wilfully refuſe to know thoſe Rules, merely that they may the more quietly practice what themſelves think fit; Both *wilfully* act againſt ſufficient *Light*, and *Evidence:* and therefore are both certainly *wilful Sinners.* So likewiſe, they

SERM. III. who do, either in any particular Action, or in any Courſe of Actions, ſin againſt the preſent Checks and Warnings of their own Conſciences; and they alſo, who ſin againſt the paſt Determination of their own Judgments, and the ſerious Reſult of their own beſt Reaſon, tho' wholly unmindful of it juſt at the time of *ſinning*; both *wilfully* ſin againſt their Conſciences: and therefore are both certainly *wilful Sinners*. And now, from what hath been ſaid upon this Subject, it will not be improper to obſerve more particularly the ſeveral *Degrees*, and *Ranks*, of thoſe who may juſtly be ſtiled *wilful Sinners*. As

1. IT is plain that in the loweſt degree of *wilful Sinners* are ſuch Perſons as have a ſincere Deſire of avoiding all Sin; ſuch as keep up in their Minds a warm Senſe of the Guilt of it; and do, in the main Tenour of their Lives, demonſtrate the Sincerity of their outward Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*, by obſerving its Laws, behaving themſelves according to its Rules, and reſiſting great and frequent Temptations to ſin: but nevertheleſs are ſometimes, through the Violence of ſome particular Temptations, hurried into ſuch a Behaviour, and ſuch Actions, as they know to be

be condemned by the *Goſpel* they profeſs, and to be diſpleaſing to *Almighty God*. But in this State they do not continue, or glory; but lament and abhor their Condition; and by Amendment raiſe themſelves as ſoon as poſſible from it. Theſe are *wilful Sinners*, in this particular Behaviour: becauſe they do the thing which their *Conſciences* condemn; and becauſe they wilfully act in this Particular, againſt the Light of that Goſpel which they enjoy. But it is hard to call ſuch Perſons by the Name juſtly beſtowed upon thoſe whoſe main Courſe of Living is directed and governed by a quite contrary Principle. For as *they* are not denominated *good* and *virtuous*, from one or two particular *good* and *virtuous* Actions; whilſt the greateſt part of their Lives is filled up with the contrary Practices: ſo neither can the *others* juſtly be denominated *wicked Men*, from one or two particular Commiſſions of Sin, whilſt the main of their Lives hath been dedicated to *Virtue*; provided that, by their Amendment in thoſe particular Inſtances, they have given ſufficient Proof of their Repentance. But what I obſerve at preſent is this, that ſuch Perſons are, in theſe Actions, *wilful*

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Sinners, for the Reaſons before given; and that they certainly ſtand in need of an *Act* of *Grace*, from *Almighty God*, in order to be aſſured of Pardon and Forgiveneſs; becauſe they have done what they themſelves acknowledge they ought not to have done; and have wilfully committed what deſerveth Puniſhment; what they cannot juſtify, but are forced to condemn themſelves for.

2. IN the next Degree of *wilful Sinners*, may be placed ſuch Perſons as have ſome Senſe of Religion, and ſome ſort of Reſolution of practiſing the Duties of it: but yet, when any conſiderable Temptation offers it ſelf, yield up themſelves to the Power of it; and at that time, when only they can experience the Sincerity of their own Minds, *viz.* in the Day of *Trial*, do very often wilfully fall into grievous and deliberate Sins. I do not ſuppoſe theſe Perſons to be ſo bad as to ſeek out Opportunities of ſinning; or to harbour in their Minds before-hand any Deſigns of laying hold on ſuch Opportunities: but, thro' ſome great Defect, or Negligence in themſelves, to be ſurpriz'd, by almoſt every Trial, into Sin; and to give themſelves Proofs of little, thro' their whole Behaviour,

haviour, beſides the Weakneſs of their own Reſolutions, and the ineffectual Senſe they have of the Truths of Religion. Of *thoſe*, mentioned under the foregoing *Head*, it may be ſaid that they are ſincere, and ſettled in the Ground-work of Religion; becauſe they reſiſt many Temptations, and govern the main part of their Lives by the Rules of it: but of *theſe*, I fear, it can hardly be ſaid that they do both truly underſtand, and heartily believe, the Nature and Importance of what they profeſs; becauſe whenever any conſiderable Trial offers itſelf, (which alone can prove whether a Man deceiveth himſelf in this Matter, or not,) they find no Strength, no Aſſiſtance, in thoſe Principles which they ſuppoſe or profeſs themſelves to have; but always renounce them for the ſake of ſome preſent Profit or Pleaſure in ſinning. When none, or very little, Fruit is ſeen to proceed from the good Seed ſown; it is a certain Sign that there is ſome Fault in the Ground in which it is lodged. But, SERM. III.

3. In the higheſt Order of *wilful Sinners*, are to be placed thoſe who are come to ſuch a Pitch in Wickedneſs, as to contrive and deſign Evil before-hand; to lay Scenes of

SERM. III. Sin; and to invite, or ſeek out, Temptations and Opportunities for it, with a Reſolution of complying, and yielding to them. I cannot conceive any Degree of *Sinners* beyond this: and it will make but a ſmall Difference in thoſe of this *Order*, that *ſome* of them meet with much fewer Opportunities ſucceſsful to their Wiſhes than *others* do. For in the Eye of God, and of Natural Juſtice, *He* hath all the Guilt of Sin, who deliberates and reſolves upon the Action, whenever a fair Opportunity ſhall offer itſelf to him; and is always prepared for more and more Sins, as more and more Occaſions preſent themſelves. That He doth not always meet with theſe Opportunities, may be happy to others: but is no Alteration of his own inward Guilt. For the *Guilt* of Sin lies where the *Wilfulneſs* of it lies; and that is in the inward Deſign and deliberate Reſolution: the longer Time any Perſon hath for the deliberating part, enhancing and increaſing the *Wilfulneſs* of the Action.

THUS, in the Account of the Goſpel, *Murthers*, *Adulteries*, *Fornications*, and all Sins, are condemned, as in the Heart; and proceeding out of the Heart: *that is*, as deſigned, and reſolved upon, within. In the Eye

Eye of our *Lord*, He is an *Adulterer*, who hath deliberately reſolved upon the committing *Adultery*; whether the Opportunity of doing it ever preſent itſelf, or not: And ſo, *He* is a *Murtherer*, that is, *He* hath the Guilt of Murther before God, who hath reſolved and decreed within himſelf, to take away his Neighbour's Life unjuſtly; whether He ever meet with a favourable Opportunity, or not. SERM. III.

And tho' Humane Governours cannot reach the Mind, or diſcover the ſecret Intention, but by the outward Act; and ſo cannot reaſonably judge of Guilt but by the outward Act: yet there is all the Reaſon in the World that Almighty God ſhould always judge of Guilt by the inward Act and Deſign; becauſe it always lies there, and becauſe He knows the inward Act of the mind in it ſelf, much more perfectly than We can know it from any outward, or open Act. Nay, we ourſelves never condemn the *outward Action*, but when it appears, at leaſt, to have proceded from a bad Deſign within. Who ever blamed a Machine, or Engine, or thought *that* guilty of Murther; becauſe Men's Lives have been taken awayby the Violence of it? Or, who ever thought

SERM. III. thought a Brute guilty, in the Senſe in which a reaſonable Creature is ſo, for having been the Occaſion of a Man's Death? Nay, who ever condemned a Man as deſerving Puniſhment, if, through unavoidable Inadvertence, or deſigning Good and Kindneſs, he hath proved the Inſtrument of Death to a Perſon, to whom he is known to have meant no Evil? Yet in all theſe Caſes there is the *material Action* which is in all Murthers; a taking away the Life of a Man: notwithſtanding which, *Guilt* is not ſuppoſed to belong to it, becauſe there wants the Deſign, the Deliberation, and the Reſolution, knowingly to do the Action. All this ſhews plainly that it is in *theſe* that the Evil of Sin lies: and that by theſe, the Men who have but few Opportunities of bringing their inward Reſolutions to outward Acts, may be made equal in Guilt to thoſe who have many more Opportunities of carrying their deſigned Wickedneſs into action; *that is*, if they have an equal Number of the ſame evil Deſigns within, and wicked deliberate Reſolutions. We may, indeed, ſuppoſe an accidental Difference in this, that one Man's Heart may relent and alter, when the Opportunity offers it ſelf;

it ſelf; and another's may not. But of this God alone can judge: and therefore, to Him alone it belongs to do it. Theſe are all the ſeveral *Orders*, and *Degrees*, of *wilful Sinners*, which I can think of: and to one or other of theſe, All that come under that Name may be reduced. SERM. III.

I SHALL only obſerve farther the Difference between theſe *Three ſorts* of *wilful Sinners*, with reſpect to the *Habit* of ſinning. For though it be impoſſible to define exactly what Number of *wilful Sins* ſhall conſtitute an *habitual Sinner*; as it is, in any Caſe, what particular Number of Actions are neceſſary to conſtitute an *Habit*, or *Cuſtom*: yet it is manifeſt that the *firſt ſort* of Sinners cannot be called *habitual Sinners*, becauſe the main Tenour of their Lives is governed by the Moral Rules of the *Goſpel*; and it is only in ſome few particular Inſtances of Temptation that they have been overcome, and tranſported from the general Bent and Biaſs of their Lives, in the Courſe of which they have triumph'd over many more of the ſame ſort of Trials, and Difficulties. It is manifeſt, in the next place, that

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that the two other ſorts of *wilful Sinners* may juſtly be called *habitual:* becauſe even the better ſort of them give themſelves up to the Power of all conſiderable Temptations; ſuffering themſelves to be carried by them into Sin; and much more frequently yielding to the Strength of the Trials they meet with, than uſing all the Force of their Souls to reſiſt and overcome them. But with this remarkable Difference, that the *one* of them do not deſign or reſolve upon Sin before-hand; or pleaſe themſelves with the Thought and Deliberation concerning it: whereas the *other* ſort have given up themſelves to contrive their own Sins; to be their own Tempters, and to yield to their own Temptations.

BUT though there be this very great Difference between theſe *Three ſorts* of *wilful Sinners*; yet they agree in this, that they have all, (the loweſt as well as the higheſt Degree of them,) done what they ought not to have done; that they may all juſtly fear a Puniſhment from God, proportionable to their ſeveral Eſtates; that they all ſtand in need of an *Act* of *Grace*, and Favour, from the great Judge of the World;

World; of *Terms* of *Condeſcenſion*, below thoſe of exact and rigorous Juſtice: in order to their Reconciliation with an offended God; and to a well-grounded Peace, and Satisfaction within themſelves. SERM. III.

THE *Terms* of which *Reconciliation*, and Favour, I laid down at the beginning of this Diſcourſe: and ſhall diſtinctly proſecute, one after another, in my following Sermons.

SERMON

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON IV.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verſe.

Maſter, What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life?

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THE Enquiry we are now upon, is this, What it is that the *Goſpel* requires of Men, who believe in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and have been baptized into his Religion, and acknowledge him for their Maſter, in order to their Acquittance from any Sins which they have at any Time been wilfully guilty of, during their Chriſtian Profeſſion; and to their final Juſtification at the Day of Judgment; and to their Eternal Happineſs after this. The *Anſwer* to this *Enquiry*, in my laſt Diſcourſe, I laid down in *four Particulars*. And I obſerved to you

you, that all *four* might be comprized in this one *general Propoſition, viz.* That it is required of *Chriſtians* who have been wilful Sinners, ſincerely to endeavour for the future to practiſe the whole Will of God, any ways made known to them; and that without this Amendment, and ſincere, univerſal Obedience, the Goſpel gives them no Ground for Hopes of Pardon and Acceptance, and Eternal Life: but that it would be more uſeful to diſcourſe upon this Subject, under the fore-mentioned Particulars. In order likewiſe to our knowing our own Condition, and the need we all have of ſome or other of theſe *Terms*, offered to ſuch as have been *wilful Sinners*, I laid before you an Account of the Nature of *wilful Sin*; what it is that makes a Man a *wilful Sinner*; and what are the ſeveral Differences, and Degrees, of ſuch as are *wilful Sinners.* And after having done this; I now come diſtinctly to conſider, in their Order, every one of the four Propoſitions, laid down in my laſt Diſcourſe: and this, *firſt*, with reſpect to their *Truth*; and *ſecondly*, with regard to their Fitneſs, and Reaſonableneſs. The *firſt Propoſition* is this,

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I. IT

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I. IT is required, in the *Goſpel-Diſpenſation*, of every *Chriſtian*, who hath been in any ſort, or any degree, a *wilful Sinner*, that He renounce, and forſake his Sins.

1. THE Truth of this will plainly appear from the following Proofs. In general, *The Grace of God*, i. e. his Mercy in the *Goſpel* is declared by St. *Paul*, *Titus* ii. 12, 13. *to have appeared unto all Men, teaching them to deny Ungodlineſs, and worldly Luſts*; i. e. to renounce and have no *Communication* with them for the future. And at the 14. v. Chriſt is ſaid *to have given himſelf for us* Chriſtians, *that he might* firſt *redeem us from all Iniquity*; in order to redeem us at laſt from the Puniſhment of it. *It is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners*, ſaith the ſame Apoſtle, 1 *Tim.* i. 15. But then immediately mentioning himſelf, as an Example and Inſtance of this Truth, by the Name of the *Chief of Sinners*, on account of his having bitterly perſecuted the *Church* of *Chriſt*; he plainly lets us know what ſort of Sinners they are to whom this Salvation is given, *viz.* ſuch as have left their Sins: as He had entirely, and with the utmoſt Abhorrence,

horrence, that great one of perſecuting his Fellow-Creatures on the account of their differing from Him in their Religion, and Worſhip of God. SERM. IV.

In Purſuance of this main Deſign of Chriſtianity, all *that name the name of Chriſt* are commanded *to depart from Iniquity*, 2 Tim. ii. 19. to *have no Fellowſhip with the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs*, Eph. v. 11. which cannot be avoided without forſaking them; to *abhor that which is evil*, Rom. xii. 9. to *abſtain from all appearance*, or, as the Words ſignify, *every ſort of Evil*, 1 Theſſ. v. 22. to *mortify their Members which are upon Earth*, under which Expreſſion all Sin is contained, *Col.* iii. 5. Particularly, *He that hath ſtolen*, is required to *ſteal no more*. Eph. iv. 28. Agreeably to this, the ſame St. *Paul*, deſcribing the Acceptance, or Juſtification, purchaſed by Chriſt, expreſſeth himſelf thus, *Rom.* viii. 1. *There is now no Condemnation to them which are in Chriſt Jeſus*, (i. e. which believe in him, and profeſs his Religion) adding theſe Words, *who walk not after the Fleſh*. And *v.* 12. *we*, Chriſtians, *are Debtors, not to the Fleſh, to live after the Fleſh:* And *v.* 13. *For if ye*

SERM. IV. *live after the Flesh, ye shall die*, i. e. eternally: *but if ye, thro' the Spirit, mortify the Deeds of the Body*, (which is a Scripture-Expression for renouncing and forsaking all Sin,) *ye shall live*; that is, enjoy the Favour of God eternally. In another place, after having reckoned up the Promises of God thro' Jesus Christ, he infers, *Having therefore these Promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse our selves from all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. that is, let us, who are Christians, if we hope to obtain the Promises of God, cleanse our selves from all Sin. *Timothy* is commanded to *turn away from*, or disown, all such Christians *as having the Form of Godliness, deny the Power thereof.* 2 Tim. iii. 5. And lest all this should not be sufficient; continual Warnings are given to such as are professed Christians, of the Danger and Eternal Punishment of Sin. They are assured over and over again by St. *Paul*, that it is for their *Sins* that *the Wrath of God will come upon them.* Col. iii. 6. He appeals to Christians themselves, 1 *Cor.* vi. 9. *Know ye not that the Unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Be not deceived, neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters*, nor other Sinners, there counted up, *shall inherit the*

Kingdom of God. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21, the Works of the Fleſh are enumerated to *Chriſtians*, that is, all the principal Sins, of the which the *Apoſtle* tells them, as He ſaith He had before, that *they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God:* And at v. 24. *They that are* truly *Chriſt's*, i. e. who will have any Benefit by him, are ſuch as *have crucified the Fleſh with the Affections and Luſts. Chap.* vi. *v.* 7, 8, the *Galatians* are called upon again *not to be deceived*; and aſſured that *God is not mocked:* but that *he that ſoweth to the Fleſh*, i. e. who doth the Works of the Fleſh, *ſhall of the Fleſh reap Corruption.* The *Epheſian Chriſtians* are likewiſe called upon, *not to be deceived with vain Words*, Eph. v. 6. and aſſured that *becauſe of theſe things*, i. e. the Sins before counted up, *the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Diſobedience*; and that no ſuch Sinners as are there mentioned, *have any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt and of God*, ver. 5. SERM. IV.

ALL which, as it was the immediate Inſtruction of God, to his *Apoſtle*; ſo was it agreeable to the open Declarations of *Chriſt*, when He was upon Earth. In his own Ac-

SERM. IV. count of his Proceedings at the great Day, He brings in ſuch as profeſſed themſelves his Diſciples, and had many Gifts to boaſt of; to whom yet he declares He will then ſay, *I know you not, depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity.* Matt. vii. 22. In the Parable of the Tares growing up with the Wheat, (by which muſt be meant unfruitful Profeſſors of his Goſpel) the Tares are ordered at laſt to be *gathered for burning.* Matt. xiii. 30. And at the 41. and 42. Verſes, they which do Iniquity are to be *gathered out of his Kingdom* (to which they profeſſed themſelves to belong;) and to be caſt into a Furnace of Fire: *there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth.* The Angels are to *ſever the Wicked from the Juſt*, and to *caſt the Wicked into the Furnace of Fire.* v. 47. The Man in the Parable, found *without a Wedding Garment*, Matt. xxii. 13. and the *unprofitable Servant*, who had not improved the *Talent* entruſted to him, that is, the Light, and Strength afforded him in the Goſpel, *Matt.* xxv. 30. are both ordered to be caſt into *outer Darkneſs, there ſhall be wailing, and gnaſhing of Teeth.*

I THOUGHT

I THOUGHT it fitting to make this Matter ſo exceeding evident, that there might remain no Doubt of it: and theſe Texts are ſo plain, that there can be no Thought of miſtaking their Meaning; tho' they be not ſo many in Number as might eaſily be alleged from the ſame Sacred Writings. And can any Chriſtians hear all this, and not argue certainly from hence, that there is a Neceſſity of forſaking their Sins, in order to any Hopes of Pardon and Acceptance at laſt? For, if it were the Deſign of the Goſpel to teach, and influence Men to *deny all Ungodlineſs*; if *Chriſtians* be commanded, upon Pain of God's Eternal Diſpleaſure, to forſake all Sin; if it be declared, both by *Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, that all *Workers of Iniquity* ſhall certainly be excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven*: then it is moſt evident, that unleſs they forſake their Sins, and are changed from being Workers of Iniquity, they are not truly, and fully, *Chriſtians*; nor ſhall ever be admitted to the Favour of God, or the Rewards of Heaven. SERM. IV.

FROM hence therefore appears moſt evidently the Truth of the *firſt* Propoſition, *viz.* That it is required, in the Goſpel-Diſpenſa-

SERM. IV. tion, of every *Chriſtian*, who hath been, in any ſort, or any Degree, a *wilful Sinner*, that He renounce and forſake his Sins. Let us now proceed to the *ſecond*; which will ſtill more confirm the Truth of the *firſt: viz.*

II. IT is required likewiſe of Him, that He ſincerely, and with Perſeverance, practiſe Holineſs, and Virtue.

THIS is almoſt always, in the *New Teſtament*, joined to the forſaking of Sin. The *Grace of God* is declared to have *appeared*, in the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, teaching Men, not only *to deny Ungodlineſs and wordly Luſts*, but alſo *to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this World.* Tit. ii. 12, 13. And at the 14th v. Chriſt is ſaid to have given himſelf for us, not only *to redeem us from all Iniquity*, but *to puriſy to himſelf a peculiar People zealous of good Works.* Agreeably to this, Chriſtians are commanded not only to *abhor that which is evil*, but alſo *to cleave to that which is good*, Rom. xii. 9. not only to *cleanſe themſelves from all Filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit*, but alſo to *perfect Holineſs in the Fear of God*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. They are told, that there is but one way of running in the *Chriſtian Race*, ſo as to

to obtain the Prize, 1 *Cor.* x. 24; that nothing avails in *Chriſt Jeſus*, that is, in the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, but a *New Creature*, or an Alteration of every thing that is bad, *Gal.* vi. 15; or, in other Words, that nothing avails, but *Faith which worketh by Love*, ch. v. 6. They are aſſured that *Faith*, or their believing in Chriſt Jeſus, is made *perfect by good Works*; and is *dead without* them, and of no account before God. *Jam.* ii. 26; that *whoſoever ſhall keep* all other parts of *God*'s Law, and wilfully and habitually *offend in one Point*, is *guilty of all*, v. 10; that *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord.* Heb. xii. 14. And indeed a great part of St. *Paul*'s Epiſtles is generally ſpent in inculcating the Moral Precepts of Religion. It is for *them* only, who, by *patient continuance in well-doing*, *ſeek for Glory and Immortality*, that *Eternal Life* is reſerved. *Rom.* ii. 7. Nay, it is declared to be ſo far from being an Advantage to a wicked Man, that he profeſſeth *Chriſtianity*, that it had been *better* for ſuch an one *not to have known the way of Righteouſneſs.* 2 Pet. ii. 21. As our Lord himſelf ſaith, *The Servant who knew his Maſter's Will, and did it not,*

SERM. IV. *ſhall be beaten with many Stripes.* Luke xii. 47.

I MIGHT multiply plain, unexceptionable Paſſages, without Number, declaring that the Rewards of God belong only to *Righteouſneſs*; that Chriſtians are *called* to *Holineſs*; that unleſs they *ſow to the Spirit*, and *bring forth the Fruits of the Spirit*, they muſt not expect *Life everlaſting*; that, *according to what they have done* in this Life, ſo ſhall be their Doom: and the like. But they would all, as indeed they are, be only Repetitions, and Enforcements of that moſt plain and expreſs Declaration of our *Lord* himſelf, who beſt knew the *Terms* of that *Acceptance*, which He himſelf purchaſed; *viz.* Matt. vii. 21. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven:* which utterly precludes all profeſſed Chriſtians from any Benefit from their Religion, unleſs they conſcientiouſly practiſe that good, and perfect Will of God, which they know to contain their Duty.

AND this being the declared Nature and Deſign of the Goſpel; this being thus evidently

dently required of Chriſtians, as neceſſary to Salvation, in many plain Paſſages, uncapable of any other Senſe: no Chriſtian can think any thing of Force enough to induce him to doubt of the *Truth* of what I have now laid down in the *Two firſt Propoſitions*, *viz.* that it is abſolutely neceſſary for any Chriſtian, who hath been in any reſpect a *wilful Sinner*, in order to his Acceptance, and Eternal Happineſs, to forſake his Sins; and with Perſeverance to practiſe all Virtue and Holineſs, whilſt He hath Opportunity allowed him: and that unleſs He do this ſo as to make it his own voluntary Act and Deed, (which muſt be before a *Death-bed* makes it impoſſible;) and ſo, as to be deſervedly denominated, *holy*, *righteous*, *ſpiritual*, and the like; He cannot have a *Title* to thoſe Rewards, which in the Goſpel are promiſed to none but ſuch as are truly ſo. SERM. IV.

And thus having eſtabliſhed the *Truth* of theſe *Two firſt Propoſitions*, upon ſuch *plain Texts* as cannot be ſhaken by any thing dubious, or obſcure; I proceed

2. Secondly, to conſider, as I propoſed, thoſe Marks of Juſtice, Reaſon, and Wiſdom, which we our ſelves may ſee to belong

SERM. IV. long to these *Two Terms* of the *Covenant* of *Grace*, thus explained.

AND here I think I may affirm, That, supposing the Nature of *Almighty God* to be such as it is; at an infinite Distance from all Sin and Iniquity, as well as kindly and tenderly disposed towards his rational Creatures; we cannot imagine any possible Conditions of the *Acceptance* of *Sinners* to his Favour, so free from all Exception, as those now laid down in the Two foregoing Propositions. For if God will at all accept Sinners to Mercy for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*; it must be supposed, either, 1. That He will accept them, for *his* Sake, let their inward Sentiments, and their outward Behaviour, continue what they please; that is, that He requires nothing at all on their part towards it: Or, 2. That He will, for the Sake of *Jesus Christ*, accept them, without any Alteration in their outward Conduct and Behaviour; provided they do but conceive and express a great Sorrow and Concern that they have transgressed his Laws: Or, 3. That He will, for the sake of Christ, *once* pardon to them all their former Transgressions; or that he will forgive such a particular Number of Transgressions;

Tranſgreſſions; after which the Sinner ſhould have no Hope of Pardon, if He ſhould relapſe into the Commiſſion of any *wilful Sin*: or elſe, 4. and laſtly, That, for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, the *Sinner* ſhall be pardoned who doth, at any time, ſo forſake his Sins, as to bring forth, in the whole Courſe and Tenour of his Life, the contrary Virtues, and do the whole Will of God. Theſe are all the *Suppoſitions* that, I believe, can be thought of, concerning the *Terms* of *Acceptance* of any who have been *wilful Sinners*. Now, SERM. IV.

1. LET us examine the firſt *Suppoſition*, which puts the Caſe, as if it were declared that *Sinners* ſhould be accepted, for the ſake of *Chriſt*, whether they regarded his Laws, or not; whether they altered their Notions, and Behaviour, or not. And what can we imagine a greater Repugnancy to all thoſe Conceptions we have of the holy Nature of God, and of the great Law of Reaſon, and uncorrupted Nature? For what plainer Declaration could Almighty God make, to lead Men to think that there was no Difference between *Moral Good* and *Moral Evil*; that *Virtue* was of no account in his Eyes; and that

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that the Distinction between *that* and *Vice*, was not worthy to be regarded by rational Creatures? This would be to make this World an Hell of Wickedness and Misery; and Heaven, at last, the Attendant upon *Vice*, which would by this means prevail over the Face of the Earth, and not upon *Virtue*, which would by this means cease from amongst the Children of Men. This is to suppose *Almighty God* descending in Offers of Mercy, in order to encourage Men, indeed, to *continue in Sin*; and causing his Son to be born into the World, I will not say, to no Purpose, but to the worst of all Purposes, *that is*, to the utter Confusion, and Disgrace of the Cause of Virtue. It is to suppose, either that He hath given no Moral Laws to be observed, which we know to be false; or that He hath left it indifferent whether Men will observe them, or no; nay, that He hath sent his Son to assure Men that this is an indifferent Matter; which is highly absurd. It is to suppose such an extraordinary Person coming into the World in so extraordinary a manner, for nothing but to speak Comfort to the worst part of Mankind, even whilst they continue the worst; and

not to leave them the leaſt effectual Motive to engage them to make themſelves better: which is the higheſt Affront we can offer to Almighty God; who cannot be ſuppoſed, without the greateſt Indignity, to viſit his Creatures after ſo extraordinary a manner, in order to carry on a Deſign oppoſite to his own Nature. In fine, it is to ſuppoſe the Cauſe of Virtue left entirely unguarded; and the main Encouragements of the Goſpel to lie on the ſide of Vice: which having the Inclinations and Cuſtoms of moſt Men on its ſide, wants nothing but ſuch a collateral Aſſiſtance as this, to enable it to overwhelm the World with an irreſiſtible Torrent. SERM. IV.

IF any ask, Who are they that ever could think thus of the *Terms* of *Acceptance* with God? I may anſwer, All ſuch as, (tho' they do not ſay it, and ſpeak it aloud, in ſo many Words, yet,) think and ſpeak, in ſuch a manner, of the Merits of *Chriſt*'s Sufferings, and the Imputation of his perſonal Holineſs to Believers, as to make his *Moral Laws* of none effect, and to render *all Virtue* in *Chriſtians*, a poor inſignificant, unneceſſary Matter; unleſs it be the great Virtue of applying the Merits of *Chriſt* to our ſelves: a Virtue,

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which *They* who have moſt Spirits, are the moſt frequently obſerved to be Maſters of: and which hath been too often ſeen to be founded upon the greateſt degree of *Confidence*, and the greateſt degree of *Guilt*, mix'd and temper'd together by a ſtrong Fancy, and Imagination. And would not this be the greateſt Reflexion upon Almighty God, to imagine that He ſhould propoſe the *Kingdom of Heaven* to *ſuffer* ſuch *Violence*; not to be *taken* by the *Force* of an holy and exemplary Life, but by the *Force* of a groundleſs Aſſurance, and a confident Application of his Promiſes?

2. IF this be not a tolerable Suppoſition, let us examine the next Suppoſition I ſpake of, concerning the *Terms* of *Acceptance*; viz. That all manner of paſt Sins ſhall be wholly pardoned for the ſake of Jeſus Chriſt, provided that the Sinner do ſometimes, and eſpecially in his laſt Moments, conceive and expreſs a very great Sorrow, and deep Concern for them. And here, let any one of the meaneſt Capacity judge, whether this be a tolerable Suppoſition concerning Almighty God, that He requires our Grief, or our Sorrow, for the ſake of it ſelf, whilſt nothing

thing good reſults from it: which is an Abſurdity plainly implied in this Imagination. For all Sorrow is, for the preſent, Miſery and Uneaſineſs, in its own Nature: and Almighty God cannot, in a State of Trial, be ſuppoſed to require, or expect, the leaſt Uneaſineſs in his Creatures, conſidered as Uneaſineſs; but merely with reſpect to their better State, and greater Happineſs for the Time to come. Nor doth He ever require our Sorrow, but as the beginning of Amendment, and the firſt Step to Reformation. But of this I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more largely, under the *Second Branch* of my preſent Deſign: when I come to examine more at length the falſe Hopes, and dangerous Miſtakes of Men, in this Affair. I ſhall only therefore at preſent obſerve farther, that the Suppoſition we are now conſidering, is encompaſſed with the ſame inſuperable Abſurdities, under which the former laboured: *viz.* That Chriſt Jeſus deſcended from Heaven to teach Men to grieve, and ſhed Tears; that He hath left Virtue unaccompanied with Encouragements, and hath beſtowed his Favours upon that which is not ſo much as the Shadow of Virtue; upon a

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Practice

SERM. IV. Practice depending more upon a peculiar Temper and Conſtitution of Body, than upon any thing truly good and virtuous in the Mind. It is to ſuppoſe *Almighty God* to accept, inſtead of Service, what no Father, no Maſter upon Earth, would accept; and, in one Word, it is to ſuppoſe God himſelf to invalidate and render vain, every Precept of Virtue, and every Moral Law, from one End of the *New Teſtament* to the other: which who can believe, unleſs one that can believe any thing of the Judge of the whole Earth? Let us therefore,

3. EXAMINE the *Third Suppoſition*, viz. That Almighty God declares He is willing to pardon a Sinner juſt to ſuch a particular Term of Life, or ſuch a particular Number of Sins: but that if, after that, He ſhall ſin wilfully; He ſhall be abſolutely unpardonable. This looks like a very great Diſcouragement to Sin: but yet at the End inevitably leads to it. For what would be the Iſſue, ſuppoſe any one, after his final Pardon, ſhould through the Violence of a Temptation, be enſnared into a wilful Sin? What would He think within himſelf, when He was once ſure that He was in a deſperate Condition?

Condition? Would He not certainly find a ſort of a preſent Refuge, in being more reſolute than ever in his wicked Courſes, ſince He could hope for no Good in breaking them off? Conſidering, therefore, the preſent Frailty and Weakneſs of Man, this would be a vaſt Diſadvantage, in the End, to the Cauſe of Holineſs and Virtue. For the promiſing Pardon to ſuch a particular Number of Tranſgreſſions, or to a Courſe of Sin of ſuch a particular Duration, would almoſt fatally influence Men, who were not of a ſort of Angelical Nature, to venture ſo far in ſome Inſtance or other, without Fear, or Suſpicion of Danger: and all that Time the Cauſe of Vice would be wholly unreſtrained. And then their own Weakneſs, and the Strength of their evil Habits, would, without all doubt, in ſome Caſe or other, carry them ſo much farther, as that they muſt come to an hopeleſs State: and that State of Deſpair of future Mercy muſt make them violent and reſolved in their Wickedneſs. Thus we ſee that even this Suppoſition, which ſeems to take moſt Care of the Cauſe of Virtue, leaves it, not only in a na-

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SERM. IV. ked, and unguarded, but in a very desperate Condition.

NAY, let us suppose that it was declared only in general, that there was a certain Number of Sins, or a certain Period of Time, beyond which God would not pardon; and not any particular Number, or Time, specified to the World: yet still most Men, it is too justly to be feared, would first be led by *Hope* to commit many Sins with a flattering Persuasion that they should not come up to that *Number*, or arrive at that *Period*; and then, when the Habit was become strong, would be fixed by *Despair* in this Opinion, that being probably got past that Number, and Period, they had e'en as good continue in their Sins, as their Inclination powerfully directs them.

THUS it appears that we our selves can discover great and considerable Inconveniencies in any other Proposal of *Terms* of *Reconciliation* between God, and Sinners, except that which I mentioned in the last place, and have before proved to be the *Truth* of the Matter; *viz.*

4. THAT, for the sake of *Jesus Christ*, the Sinner shall be pardoned, who doth, at

any time, ſo forſake his Sins, as to bring forth, in the Courſe and Tenour of his Life, the contrary Virtues, and ſincerely perform the whole Will of God. In which Propoſal, you may ſee, that when it is ſaid that all *wilful Sinners*, amending their Lives, ſhall be accepted, there is all the Encouragement poſſible given to the Practice of Virtue, without making its Cauſe deſperate, even to thoſe who have very much neglected it for the Time paſt: and that when it is ſaid that no *wilful Sinners*, without ſuch actual Amendment of their Ways, ſhall be accepted, there is all the Diſcouragement given to Vice that can be, without throwing the Sinner into ſuch a deſperate Condition, as to tempt him to have recourſe to his very Sins for Comfort. SERM. IV.

I AM not unſenſible that there is this Inconvenience attending the Promulgation of Pardon and Favour, even upon theſe Terms; *viz.* That Men of evil Diſpoſitions, and ſtrong Propenſions to Sin, but yet not void of all regard to future Happineſs, are led from hence to the baſeſt Return to ſo much Mercy; to imagine, becauſe all wilful Sinners are pardonable upon theſe Conditions, that therefore all is well, if one time or other

SERM. IV. they take care to come up to them: and ſo, with the Poſſibility of this, they rather encourage themſelves to go on for the preſent in the Commiſſion of Sin, than immediately to forſake it. We find that there were ſome ſuch ungrateful Perſons, in the very firſt Ages of the *Goſpel*, who baſely encouraged themſelves to continue in their Sins, as if it would magnify the Honour of God's Favour, to have more to pardon than they had already committed. St. *Paul* ſpeaks with the utmoſt Abhorrence of this way of arguing, *Rom.* vi. 1. *What ſhall we ſay then? Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound?* That is, in order to give the Mercy of God an Opportunity of ſhewing it ſelf yet more? *God forbid!* God forbid, indeed, that any ſhould be of ſo unworthy a Temper, as wilfully before-hand to encourage themſelves to affront their Maker, becauſe He hath been ſo merciful, beyond their Deſervings, as to declare that He will accept them whenever they truly turn to him.

I MENTION not this, in order to argue at this time with ſuch Perſons as theſe, who ſeem to be in the very next Degree to deſperate and unpardonable; (which one would think

think ſufficient to allarm any Men in their Senſes;) but in order to obviate an Objection which may ariſe from the ſeeming Imprudence of openly propoſing Favour upon ſuch Conditions, *viz.* That wicked Men may be led to abuſe them to other Purpoſes, and to their own Deſtruction: In order, I ſay, to obviate ſuch an Objection by obſerving that nothing of this Nature can be framed, but what they may ſo abuſe; that it is fit and reaſonable that, in ſo great a Matter, ſomething ſhould be left to the Application of Men themſelves, and to the Sincerity of their own Minds; and therefore that this rather ſhews the Wiſdom of the Diſpenſation than deſtroys it; that if our Goſpel be ineffectual on this Account, it is ſo only *to thoſe who are loſt*, that is, to Men *loſt* to all Senſe of *Virtue*, or common Gratitude; *loſt* to all that is good and tolerable, and totally given up to worldly or beſtial Enjoyments; and that Men of ſuch Tempers deſerve to fall into ſuch a Snare, and appear reſolved upon Sin, whatever *Terms* of *Acceptance* could have been offered them. Notwithſtanding therefore, that this Inconvenience may attend this peculiar Method of *Acceptance*: SERM. IV.

SERM. IV. yet ſince it is excellently fitted for the Happineſs of all who are truly honeſt and ſincere; ſince it hath been ſhewn that much greater Inconveniencies muſt attend all others that can well be thought of; and it is plain that *this* ariſeth from an invincible Perverſity of Mind; this is ſufficient to juſtify the excellent Contrivance of this Method, above all others. For infinite Wiſdom itſelf can do no more than chuſe that particular Method which is the beſt of all that are poſſible; and hath the feweſt real Inconveniencies attending it; and is moſt agreeable to the Nature of God, the Condition of Man, and the *End* propoſed in it.

I SHALL only add that, from what hath been ſaid, we may learn to adore the Goodneſs of God in condeſcending to grant any *Terms* to *wilful Sinners*; and to admire his Wiſdom, in doing this after ſuch a manner as at once to ſhew the ſtricteſt Regard to *Virtue*; and the tendereſt Compaſſion to his Creatures that have erred from the Paths of it. And God grant that we may be of the Number of thoſe happy Chriſtians, who embrace theſe Terms, and, upon them only, ſeek for Happineſs and Eternal Life! Amen!

SER-

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON V.

LUKE X. The latter part of the 25th Verſe.

Maſter, What ſhall I do to inherit eternal Life?

IN anſwer to the *Enquiry* which I propoſed from theſe Words, *viz.* What it is that is required in the Goſpel, of a *Chriſtian*, who hath been in any ſort, or degree, a wilful Sinner, in order to his Acquittance, and Eternal Happineſs, thro' *Jeſus Chriſt*; I laid down the *four* following Propoſitions. SERM. V.

I. IT is required of ſuch an one, that He renounce and forſake his Sins.

II. IT is required that He ſincerely, and with Perſeverance, practiſe Holineſs, and Virtue.

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III. IN order to his Acceptance, it is required not only that he forſake his own Sins, and amend his Life in other Inſtances; but likewiſe that He entirely forgive the Offenſes and Treſpaſſes of others againſt himſelf. And,

IV. IN the Caſe of *Injuſtice*, it is not ſufficient that the Sinner leaves off Injuſtice for the future, ſo far as to do Wrong to no more Perſons than thoſe He hath already injured: but He muſt alſo, as ever he hopes for Mercy and Acceptance with God, make Reſtitution of what He hath at any time wronged any one of; and all poſſible Reparation for the Injuries which he hath heretofore been guilty of.

THE *Two firſt* of theſe I conſidered in my laſt Diſcourſe, *firſt*, ſhewing the *Truth* of them from plain, unexceptionable *Texts* of the *New Teſtament*, uncapable of any other Meaning; and *ſecondly*, the Reaſonableneſs, and Fitneſs of the *Terms* of Salvation laid down in them, conſidering the Nature of *God* and *Man*, above any other, which we could poſſibly ſuppoſe. I come now to conſider the *Third* Propoſition laid down, *viz.*

III. THAT

III. THAT it is required of a *Chriſtian*, who hath been a *wilful Sinner*, not only to forſake his own Sins, and amend his Life; but likewiſe entirely to forgive the Offenſes, and Treſpaſſes of others, againſt himſelf. SERM. V.

THIS *Condition* of *Acceptance*, as I hinted to you once before, might juſtly have been reduced to the Two foregoing *Propoſitions:* becauſe, Forgiveneſs being a part of Evangelical Duty, and Implacability and Revenge ſinful and criminal in their own Natures, it is impoſſible that a Man ſhould forſake his Sins, which, according to the *firſt Propoſition*, is abſolutely required, without forſaking his Reſolutions, and Diſpoſition to Revenge, and Retaliation; or that He ſhould practiſe all Holineſs and Virtue, according to the *Second Propoſition*, without practiſing Forgiveneſs, and demonſtrating himſelf to be of a yielding and placable Temper. But ſince the Evidence of this Virtue hath been ſo much over-clouded by the Paſſions of Men; nay, ſince it hath paſſed, in many Caſes, almoſt for a Vice; ſince our Lord, and his Apoſtles, added to their general Exhortations concerning Repentance, and

SERM. V. and Amendment, the moſt particular Injunctions about this Point; ſince, even under the Light of the Goſpel there are too many, who will hardly be perſuaded to put their high Reſentments, and Purpoſes of Retaliation, amongſt their Vices, which they are obliged, upon Pain of Damnation, to relinquiſh, and forſake; and *laſtly*, ſince there is ſo much ſaid in the *Goſpel* of the peculiar Neceſſity of this forgiving Temper towards our own Forgiveneſs, and of its peculiar Efficacy towards our Juſtification, it very deſervedly claims a particular Place in our Conſideration, when we are enquiring after the *Terms* of our Eternal Happineſs: as will appear, I do not doubt, from what I have to offer concerning it. And for your Satisfaction in this Inſtance, I propoſe,

1. To ſhew you, from the plaineſt Paſſages of the *New Teſtament*, that this Forgiveneſs of others is indiſpenſably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveneſs.

2. To prevent Miſtakes, I deſign to ſhew you the true Meaning of what is declared in any of theſe Texts concerning the peculiar Efficacy

Efficacy of this Virtue upon Almighty God towards our Acceptance with him. And, SERM. V.

3. I SHALL ſhew you the great Reaſonableneſs, and Fitneſs, of God's requiring this of us; and of our practiſing it, in its utmoſt Extent, and Comprehenſion.

1. I SAY, I deſign to prove the Truth of the Propoſition laid down; and to ſhew you that the Forgiveneſs of the Offenſes and Treſpaſſes of others againſt our ſelves is indiſpenſably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveneſs, and Juſtification.

THE firſt Proof we meet with of this, is in the Sixth Chapter of St. *Matthew*, part of that Divine Diſcourſe upon the Mount, in which our Lord deſigned to let his Diſciples into the Knowledge of the Nature of his Bleſſings, and of his Doctrine. At the 7th Verſe we find him teaching them a moſt comprehenſive *Form* of *Prayer:* one Petition of which, *v.* 12. is this, *Forgive us our Debts, as we forgive our Debtors.* The *Debts*, by which we have become obnoxious to Almighty God, are our Sins, and Offenſes againſt his Law. Accordingly, in St. *Luke*, this Petition is expreſſed thus, *ch.* xi. *v.* 4. *Forgive us our Sins: for we alſo forgive every*

SERM. V. *very one that is indebted to us.* This is the greateſt Proof our bleſſed Lord could have given of the Importance, and Neceſſity, of this forgiving Temper in us; that He hath put it into this very ſhort Form, in which He could not expreſs all Things particularly; and commanded his Diſciples to ask Forgiveneſs of God on no other Terms, but their forgiving the Offenſes of others againſt themſelves. Forgive us, as we forgive others; *i. e.* as far as we do the ſame to our Fellow-Creatures; and no farther; or, as it is in St. *Luke*, Forgive us, for we forgive all others: as if we ought not to approach God, and could not, upon the Goſpel-Covenant, apply to Him for Forgiveneſs, unleſs at the ſame time we could appeal to our own Hearts, and declare that we were entirely diſpoſed to forgive all others.

BUT becauſe this was, to the corrupted State of Mankind, a new Doctrine, tho' eternally reaſonable, and good; our Lord, for the farther Declaration and Explication of his Mind, *Matth.* vi. 14, 15. immediately adds the following Words, *For if ye forgive Men their Treſpaſſes* (that is the meaning of *Debts*, ver. 12.) *your Heavenly Father will*

will alſo forgive you. But if ye forgive not Men their Treſpaſſes; neither will your Father forgive your Treſpaſſes. As if He had ſaid, Be not ſurprized that I put ſuch a Petition into the *Prayer*, which I have recommended to you; ſo ſeemingly new, upon the Principles commonly received in the World: for I tell you that this is one main part of my Doctrine, and one great Condition of that Forgiveneſs, which I am to preach, and which Sinners are ſeeking after, that ye forgive one another; and that without it God will never forgive you. Agreeably to this, *Mark* xi. 25,26, He tells his Diſciples plainly, that this Forgiveneſs is ſo neceſſary and requiſite, that they had as good not pray to God for Forgiveneſs at all, as to pray to him without this forgiving Diſpoſition. *And when ye ſtand praying*, (or, when ye are praying to God) *forgive if ye have ought againſt any: that your Father which is in Heaven may forgive you your Treſpaſſes. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in Heaven forgive your Treſpaſſes.* It is in vain for you to expect; it is impudent for you to ask, of God, Forgiveneſs on your own Behalf;

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SERM. V. Behalf; if you refuſe to entertain this forgiving Temper with reſpect to others.

THE ſame thing, thus plainly expreſſed, is very ſignificantly ſet forth, *Matth.* xviii. 23. in the *Parable* of a *Servant*, or *Slave*, who owed his Maſter *Ten Thouſand Talents*, which his Maſter, upon his earneſt Requeſt, forgave him. But *He*, little moved with the Compaſſion of his Maſter, went and found one of his Fellow-Servants, who owed him an *hundred Pence:* whom, notwithſtanding all his Entreaties, He caſt into Priſon, and reduced to extreme Miſery, on this Account. But when his Lord heard it, He did not reckon that it was fit to let his former Forgiveneſs ſtand good: but gave him up to Miſery, and Puniſhment, till He could ſatisfy for his old Debt. Of which, for fear Chriſtians ſhould not willingly make the Application themſelves, our *Lord* doth it in plain Words, *ver.* 35. *So likewiſe ſhall my Heavenly Father do alſo unto you, if ye, from your Hearts, forgive not, every one his Brother their Treſpaſſes:* that is, He ſhall rigorouſly exact of us a due Satisfaction, and Puniſhment for every Sin we have been guilty of towards him; if we be ſo rigorous as

to

to take Vengeance of our Fellow-Creatures for the Offenſes they have been guilty of towards our ſelves. This *Parable*, concerning an unconfined Forgiveneſs, was ſpoken, upon occaſion of St. *Peter*'s Queſtion to our Lord, *v.* 21. He had naturally a great deal of Warmth in his Temper, and an abundance of Heat and Paſſion, before the Chriſtian Spirit had quelled, and tamed it. This Temper made him willing to hope that, if any Forgiveneſs was neceſſary, yet perhaps not a Forgiveneſs unlimited, and unreſtrained; but only a Forgiveneſs of ſo many particular Affronts, or Injuries, after which Revenge, (for the Sweetneſs of which ſome Men would even be content with receiving Injuries) might again become lawful. *Then came Peter to him, and ſaid, Lord, how oft ſhall my Brother ſin againſt me, and I forgive him? Till ſeven Times?* He was willing, you ſee, to allow what we eſteem a good Number of Affronts, provided there might be any Hope left of coming afterwards to Revenge again. But *Jeſus* ſaith unto him, *v.* 22. *I ſay not unto thee, until ſeven times, but until ſeventy times ſeven:* which Anſwer, according to the uſual way of ſpeaking, (*i. e.*

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SERM. V. (*i. e.* putting a definite large Number for an indefinite one) manifeſtly was deſigned to teach him, and, in him, all Men of the like natural Heat and Fire, that his Doctrine was not deſigned to fix any Bounds to Forgiveneſs; but that, as we muſt have Forgiveneſs at the Hands of God, not for *Seven Offenſes*, but for *Seventy times Seven*; not for any particular Number of our Sins, but for all, without Exception, before we can be happy; ſo, we muſt forgive our Fellow-Creatures, not *Seven times* only, but *Seventy times Seven*, if there be occaſion; even all, and every of their Offenſes againſt us.

THE ſame thing, in the 17th Chapter of St. *Luke*, v. 4. is expreſſed by our Brother's ſinning againſt us *Seven times in one Day*; where that Number is put for an indefinite Number, becauſe it is not well poſſible to ſuppoſe that any one ſhould be guilty, in one Day, of ſo many Injuries towards another, as *Seven*. *If He treſpaſs againſt thee ſeven times in a Day, and ſeven times in a Day turn again to thee, ſaying, I repent; thou ſhalt forgive him.* Here indeed it is put upon the injurious Man's repenting; and coming to us; and begging Pardon

Pardon; and declaring his Senſe of his Crime. But it is manifeſt that we are required to forgive not only when He doth this; but likewiſe when He doth not: becauſe, as I have before obſerved, we are not to beg Pardon of God any farther than we pardon others; and we are never to pray for Forgiveneſs, without declaring that we do forgive others; or without feeling within our ſelves that we have the Diſpoſition and Reſolution to do it. The ſame St. *Luke*, ch. vi. *v.* 7. records theſe plain Words of our Lord, *Forgive, and ye ſhall be forgiven*; and v. 38. *For with the ſame Meaſure that ye mete* (or meaſure) *withal, it ſhall be meaſured to you again:* that is, if ye do not forgive others, but are rigorous upon them; Almighty God will certainly be as rigorous upon you, in the requiring Satisfaction and Puniſhment for every Sin that you have at any time committed againſt him. SERM. V.

AGREEABLY to this plain Doctrine of their Maſter, the *Apoſtles* preached the ſame univerſal Love, and unconfined Spirit of Forgiveneſs. St. *Paul* calls upon the *Romans* to lay aſide all Thoughts of Revenge, upon any Provocation, or Injury. *Ch.* xii. *v.* 19.

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Dearly Beloved, avenge not your ſelves. And *v.* 21. *Be not overcome of Evil,* ſo far as to return, and retaliate, Injuries; *but overcome Evil,* by returning *Good* for it: which cannnot be done without a forgiving Temper. I omitt many ſuch like Paſſages in the Goſpels, againſt Revenge, and Retaliation; becauſe I would confine my ſelf to thoſe *Texts* which expreſly touch the Point in hand. The ſame St. *Paul* calls upon the *Epheſians, Be ye kind, one to another; tender-hearted; forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath forgiven you.* ch. iv. 32. And addreſſes himſelf to the *Coloſſians,* ch. iii. v. 12, 13. after this pathetical manner. *Put on therefore, as the Elect of God, holy and beloved,* (for ſo Chriſtians are called in the New Teſtament,) *Bowels of Mercies, Kindneſs, Long-ſuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any Man have a Quarrel againſt any: even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo alſo do ye.* I have now ſaid what is fully ſufficient to ſatisfy you that this Forgiveneſs of others is indiſpenſably required at our Hands, in order to our own Forgiveneſs; and that without

without this we ought not ſo much as to ask Forgiveneſs of God. I ſhall now SERM. V.

2. JUST obſerve to you the true Meaning of what is declared concerning the Efficacy of this *Forgiveneſs* of others, upon Almighty God, towards our own Forgiveneſs, and Acceptance; which is in ſhort this, That, without this Forgiveneſs of others on our part, He will never finally acquit us from the Guilt of any of our Sins: that it is not ſufficient for any Sinner to forſake his Drunkenneſs, or Uncleanneſs, or Swearing, or any other Vice; but He muſt likewiſe forgive others their Treſpaſſes and Injuries againſt himſelf: and that otherwiſe, God will be as ſevere upon him, and require an Account of every Sin, which he hath at any time been guilty of, through his whole life.

I HAVE before ſhewn you, from the plaineſt Texts, that it is abſolutely required that Men forſake all other Vices; and become holy, and virtuous, in order to their final Pardon, and Happineſs. It is impoſſible therefore, that what is ſaid concerning the Efficacy of this Forgiveneſs of others, ſhould invalidate what is ſaid of the Neceſſity of a good Life in other Reſpects. I have

SERM. V. now ſhewn you that it is as plainly ſaid as Words can expreſs it, that if we forgive, we ſhall be forgiven. The Meaning therefore, can be only this, that thoſe Sins which we have forſaken, and utterly renounced, ſhall be forgiven to us; if we will forgive thoſe Sins which others have committed againſt us: But if we will not, that our Heavenly Father will upon no Terms forgive us our paſt Sins; not even tho' we have forſaken them. Thus, you ſee the ſeveral Paſſages about theſe diſtinct *Terms* are very eaſily reconcileable. God will not forgive us, and make us happy, unleſs we forſake our own Sins: nor will He then forgive us, unleſs to this Amendment, in other Inſtances, we add a placable forgiving Temper with reſpect to Neighbours; and readily and heartily remit to our Fellow-Creatures, ſo as not to take Vengeance on them, their Offences againſt our ſelves. This I juſt take notice of here: but I ſhall have another Opportunity diſtinctly and fully to handle it, when I come, in due Place and Time, to examine thoſe Pretences which Men have built upon miſtaken and miſapplied Texts of Scripture: amongſt which will come in the Pretence of Men, to

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get rid of the Neceſſity of a good Life in other reſpects, founded upon the Promiſe of God made to this Forgiveneſs of other Men's Treſpaſſes, taken diſtinctly by itſelf, and ſeparated from the other Rules of the Goſpel. SERM. V.

3. I PROPOSED, in the third place, to ſhew you the great Reaſonableneſs, and Fitneſs, that this forgiving Diſpoſition ſhould be required by God, and heartily practiſed by us; as it hath been now explained. A very few Words will ſatisfy us of this: for,

1. IF *this* were ſo required, as to ſtand in the ſtead of other Duties, and atone for the continued Neglect of them: then farewel all Hopes of any Virtue, except this, in the World: of which I cannot determine, whether it would then be a Virtue, or no. In vain are all the Promiſes of God made to Righteouſneſs; in vain are all his Terrors diſplayed againſt all manner of Sin; in vain are all the Moral Precepts inculcated from the beginning to the end of the *New Teſtament*; if this ſingle Virtue may at laſt make Atonement for a Life of wilful, and habitual Sin. This ſhews us the Unreaſonableneſs of ſuppoſing that God can attribute ſuch an Efficacy to this, as to make all his other Laws en-

SERM. V. tirely of none Effect; and to give a Looſe to almoſt all manner of Vice, and Wickedneſs in the World. Nor could any thing be a greater Encouragement particularly to the mutual doing of Injuries, than this. It is highly reaſonable, therefore, that this *Forgiveneſs* ſhould be required, and favoured, no otherwiſe than as in Conjunction with all other Virtues. And,

2. THERE cannot be a more equitable and unexceptionable Condition, propoſed to us than this, that we ſhould not expect that Mercy at the Hands of God, which we will not ſhew to our Fellow-Creatures. Who that conſiders the Obligations He hath received from *Almighty God*; the infinite Diſtance between Him and his Creatures; the Guilt and Heinouſneſs of the leaſt Sin, and the leaſt Neglect, where ſo much is, on ſo many Accounts, owing: Who that hath common Modeſty, or the leaſt degree of Conſideration, would not think it fit, to forgive the greateſt Offences of others againſt himſelf, (little and inconſiderable, in compariſon of the leaſt Offences of a Creature againſt God,) and even voluntarily to do this, in order to diſpoſe his Judge to be merciful to him? Or, can

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can any one think it proper to come into the Preſence of God, and ask or expect Pardon for his own Sins; and in the ſame Breath to tell *Almighty God*, He never can forgive his Brother? *Forgive us our Treſpaſſes*, O Lord; tho' we never will forgive thoſe committed by frail Men againſt our ſelves. Thus doth every one in effect pray, who comes before God, with an Heart full of Revenge and Retaliation; or void of Forgiveneſs, and Mercy. And how abſurd this is, I need not ſay. Would any Earthly *Maſter*, as our Lord intimates in the Parable, forgive a Servant who ſhould openly refuſe to forgive his Fellow-Servant; or remit his Puniſhment for Crimes againſt himſelf, when he ſaw him exerciſing Barbarity and Cruelty, in revenging himſelf upon his Fellow-Servants, for the leaſt Affronts and Injuries? Nay, what Servant would not gladly comply, and think it great Condeſcenſion, if his *Maſter* ſhould offer him to forgive him all his Debts, or Offenſes, on Condition that He would do the ſame, with regard to his poor Fellow-Servants? And certainly, there can be no Chriſtian, or Man, of ſo embittered a Temper, as not to think this a moſt reaſonable Condi-

SERM. V. tion of his own Forgiveneſs; or to expect that God ſhould forgive Him, whilſt He breaths nothing but Revenge, and Puniſhment, for every Offenſe of his Fellow-Creatures. But enough of this. I muſt now ſpeak a little upon the *laſt* of the *four Propoſitions* laid down: which is this.

IV. IN the Caſe of Injuſtice, it is not ſufficient that the Sinner leave off Injuſtice for the future, ſo far as not to do the leaſt wrong to any Perſons, thro' the remaining part of his life: but He muſt alſo, as ever He hopes for Mercy and Acceptance with God, make Reſtitution of what He hath at any time wronged any one of; and Reparation for the Injuries which He hath at any time heretofore, by Word, or Deed, committed againſt his Neighbour.

HERE ſome one may ask, Where is the plain Text of the *New Teſtament*, which requires this Reſtitution? To which I anſwer, that indeed there is none which in ſo many Words doth ſay this; but that the reaſon of this is manifeſtly becauſe this is a part of *Common Juſtice*; of the Obligation to which there was ever an open Acknowledgment in all Nations, as of what was no more than one of the loweſt Degrees of Virtue. We

have an Inſtance in the *Goſpel*, I mean that of *Zaccheus*, who, when he once came to think of making his Peace with God, declared openly his Reſolution to reſtore more than what he had wronged any Man of, if any ſuch wrong could be proved upon him. We have it declared by St. *Paul*, that *neither Thieves, nor Covetous, nor Extortioners, ſhall inherit the Kingdom of God.* 1 Cor. 6. 10. And *Eph.* 5. 5. the *Covetous* are reckoned up amongſt ſuch as have *no Inheritance in the Kingdom of God, and of Chriſt.* In the *Tenth Commandment*, recognized and reinforced, in the Goſpel, we are abſolutely forbid to covet any thing that is our Neighbours. Now whoever doth, after an injurious Acquirement, or indeed an Acquirement of any ſort, detain what He knows to belong to another, is moſt certainly a *Thief*, in the Senſe of the Word truly criminal; a *covetous Man* and an *Extortioner*, who flouriſhes upon the Spoils of his Neighbour: and therefore muſt expect to be excluded the *Kingdom of Heaven*, as ſuch. For who is there that can more properly be ſaid to *covet* what is his Neighbour's, than the Man who, by Fraud, or Force, retains

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SERM. V. in his Poſſeſſion what He knows another to have a Right to? Common Honeſty, and Juſtice, are what the very Heathens, and even the moſt Ignorant of them, have ever acknowledged to be Duties. And as ſurely as the higheſt Crimes will be puniſhed by Almighty God; ſo ſurely the Diſhoneſt, and Unjuſt, will have a particular Share in his Wrath. The Deſign of the Goſpel was to make *Chriſtians* ſomewhat more than honeſt Men: but if They, who have the Light of the Goſpel, will not be ſo much as *good Heathens*, they will be certain to inherit the Puniſhment of the *worſt* of *Chriſtians*, and of ſuch as have refuſed to practiſe the very loweſt degree of Virtue.

RESTITUTION, and Reparation, I ſay, are Inſtances of Juſtice, ſtrictly due. The continued Refuſal of them is a continued Act of Injuſtice; a continued Theft; a continued Extortion; an Habit of the groſſeſt Vice. And conſequently, if Injuſtice it ſelf can never be pardoned, till it be forſaken; this complicated, and continued, wilful Injuſtice will raiſe the Account of a Sinner to an unpardonable Heighth. How then can *They* hope for Mercy, who cannot ſo much as pre-

tend to common Honesty, and Justice; but every Minute of their Lives are treasuring up Wrath, and increasing their first Guilt, by approving their own Injustice; and acting it anew by refusing to undo it by Restitution, and Reparation? Certainly, He that can think to go to Heaven without being an honest Man, and whilst he robs his Neighbour every Moment that He lives without Restitution, must take it to be the Reward of Villany, and the Receptacle of such Knaves as Humane Society would not bear, could they be fairly detected, and prosecuted. SERM. V.

THIS I have said, because many People seem to think *Restitution* to be somewhat distinct from *common Justice*, and *Honesty*: when truly it is only a Branch of it; and the contrary Vice nothing but a complicated *Knavery*, and an Injustice, the Guilt of which increaseth every Moment; and consequently, the Continuance in it, utterly irreconcileable to all Hopes of Happiness, according to the Gospel-Dispensation. I might have added more upon this Head: but it is not my present Design to enter into the Nature of this, or any other, particular Virtue; but only to shew that *this* is indispensably

SERM. V. bly required in order to the Juſtification, and Happineſs, of ſuch *Chriſtians* as have ſinned againſt the plain Law of Juſtice and Honeſty.

I HAVE now gone over the *four general Propoſitions* which I laid down, in anſwer to the important *Enquiry* after the Way to *Life* and Eternal Happineſs. We ſee, from the plaineſt Proofs, that there remain no Hopes of Acceptance for Sinners, according to the Goſpel, unleſs they forſake their Sins, and practiſe Virtue; unleſs they heartily forgive the Treſpaſſes of their Neighbours; and make Reſtitution of what they have wronged any Man of, according to the utmoſt of their Power. From hence appear the Vanity and Folly of building any Hopes of Mercy upon any thing beſides theſe, ſo clearly, as to need no other Proof. But becauſe the Imaginations of Men have been various in framing other Terms of Acceptance; and preſſing even the *New Teſtament* it ſelf into their Service: it is another Branch, therefore, of the Deſign I have now in View, to examine particularly into their *Pretenſes*; and to endeavour to ſhew ſuch Perſons their miſerable Deluſion. In the mean time, *If we know theſe Things; happy only are we if we do them:* Which God grant, *&c.* SER-

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON VI.

St. *JAMES*, ii. 10.

For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

HAVING in ſeveral Diſcourſes endeavoured plainly and particularly to propoſe the *Terms*, or *Conditions*, on which alone *Chriſtians*, who have been, in any ſenſe, or any degree, *wilful Sinners*, may hope to be acquitted, juſtified, accepted, and made eternally happy, by Almighty God; it may not be improper now to handle this important Subject after a manner, which, tho' ſomething different, may yet be of farther uſe to us in our ſerious Enquiry after the Way to Happineſs, and Eternal Life. In order

SERM. VI. der to this, I could think of no Paſſage of Scripture, more comprehenſive; or more proper, than this taken out of St. *James*, in which He declares that *whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all:* and I deſign, therefore,

I. To explain to you, as well as I can, the true Meaning of the Words.

II. To propoſe to you the Doctrine plainly taught in them: and to prove the Juſtice, and Reaſonableneſs of it.

III. To anſwer ſome Queſtions, and Doubts, which may ariſe upon this Subject. And

IV. To draw ſuch Obſervations, and Inferences, from the whole, as may be of great uſe in order to our ſucceſsful Endeavours after Eternal Life.

I. IT is very proper to explain to you, as well as I can, the true Meaning of this Paſſage: which, as to the manner of Expreſſion, is not without ſome Difficulty. And,

1. THE Meaning of it cannot be this, that *whoſoever tranſgreſſeth in one ſingle Inſtance*, is as bad a Man; as great a Sinner; as guilty an Offender; as he that tranſgreſſeth in every Inſtance poſſible: that he who covets

vets his Neighbour's Goods, for Example, is as bad a Man, and as great a Sinner, as he who not only covets his Neighbour's Goods, but alſo commits Adultery, Murther, and Theft; profanes the Name of God; diſhonours his Father and Mother; and breaks every Law that he can poſſibly, in Contempt of God, and his Authority. This cannot be the meaning of the Paſſage: becauſe it is abſurd, at firſt hearing, thus to take away all Diſtinction between the degrees of Sin, and Sinners; and to make all Tranſgreſſors, tho' differing in the Inſtances, and Number, of their ſeveral Tranſgreſſions, equal in their Crimes, and in their Guilt. Nor conſequently, SERM. VI.

2. CAN it be underſtood to imply in it, that God will puniſh all ſuch Perſons equally; that the Man who offends only in one Inſtance, ſhall be made equal, in the degree of Puniſhment, to him who hath offended in that, and in many more: becauſe the Puniſhment of Offenders is without doubt to be proportioned to their ſeveral Offenſes; and becauſe he who offends in many Caſes, is guilty of a more repeated and ſettled Contempt of the Authority of the Law-giver, than

SERM. VI. than the other, and therefore must reasonably expect a greater degree of Punishment. But,

3. HE who offends against the known Law of God, in any one Instance, may, on other Accounts, tho' not on these abovementioned, be said to be guilty with respect to all his Laws.

IN the first place, as he sins manifestly against that Divine Authority which enacted that part of the Law which he transgresseth, as well as those others which he thinks fit to observe. For Sin, tho' committed but in one Instance, is a sort of a Denial of that Authority by which it is forbidden: and this, tho' applied by the Sinner himself to one Instance only, yet affects all others; because Almighty God hath the same Authority to command, or forbid one thing, that he hath to command or forbid another. Now if we, by our Practice, deny, in effect, his Right to govern us in one Instance; we do, in effect deny it in all; because He hath as much Right to do it in this, as in others; and no more in others than in this. In this respect therefore, whosoever *offends* wilfully *in one Point*, may be said to be *guilty of all*; that his wilful

ful offending in this Point, is a Rebellion a- SERM. gainſt the Authority of God: which touch- VI. eth all his other Laws, as well as this one which he tranſgreſſeth. And thus St. *James* himſelf ſeems to explain his own Meaning, in the Verſe immediately following the Text. *For He that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not kill. If therefore thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.* As if he had expreſſed himſelf thus. The meaning of my charging a Man who ſins in *one* Inſtance, with being *guilty of all*, is this, that the ſame God who forbids the other Sins, forbids this one alſo. Therefore, if thou doſt abſtain from the other Sins, and yet wilfully ſinneſt in this one point; Thou art a Sinner with reſpect to the other Points as well as this: becauſe God claims no greater Authority in thoſe other Points than He doth in this; and Thou, by wilfully offending in this one Point, calleſt in queſtion his whole Authority, and the *Validity* of his whole Law, which hath no more to uphold it in other Inſtances, than what it hath in this which thou neglecteſt. And this certainly muſt aggravate and increaſe the Guilt

SERM. VI. of one, who wilfully ſins in any *one* Inſtance only, that it reflects highly upon the whole Law; and that, by calling in queſtion, or refuſing to obey, the Authority of God in this one Point, the Sinner effectually calls in queſtion his whole Authority, which is juſt the ſame with reſpect to others. In this Senſe therefore, it may be true, that a Man's Guilt will not be proportionable to the intrinſic Evil of the ſingle Sin which He indulges himſelf in; but aggravated by conſidering this Sin, as forbidden by the Authority of God; and as having a very bad Influence upon that Authority in other reſpects; tending as much to weaken and deſtroy it in *other* Inſtances, as it doth in effect call it in queſtion, and contemn it in *this*.

AGAIN, the *Guilt* of a Man who offends wilfully in *one* Point of God's Law, muſt likewiſe be ſuppoſed to extend, in ſome degree, to all the reſt, becauſe it is certain that the ſame Diſpoſition of Mind which engageth, or permits, him to tranſgreſs one Law, when Inclination or Intereſt, Pleaſure or Profit, invite him, would likewiſe prevail with him to tranſgreſs any of the others likewiſe, ſuppoſing him under the Influence

fluence of the ſame Inclination or Intereſt, Pleaſure or Profit. For the Occaſion of his wilful Commiſſion of *one* Sin, is that He hath ſome Temptation to it, which He has ſhewn to be too hard for his Faith, and his Senſe of God's Authority, to conquer. If therefore, he had the ſame Temptatation to another Vice; if it were accompanied with the ſame Circumſtances, equally grateful to his Senſuality, or Covetouſneſs, or Ambition; is it not plain that He would equally permit himſelf to be carried away with the Temptation to it? So that his Innocence in other Reſpects is not owing to his Virtue, or Faith, or Senſe of God's Authority; but to Neceſſity; to his want of the ſame Inclination, and the ſame Temptation to theſe, which He hath, with reſpect to that which He wilfully commits. For if he had that Faith, or Senſe of God's Authority, which is ſufficient to ſet him above the ſame degree of Temptation to other Vices; this would as certainly ſet him above the Power of the Temptation He hath to this one. And conſequently, He muſt be guilty, in ſome degree, with reſpect to all: becauſe He is ſo diſpoſed, as that his Religion, were it to under-

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go an equal Tryal in other Reſpects, would moſt certainly yield to it in them, as it doth in this Inſtance, in which it pleaſeth God in a particular manner to try his Faith, and Senſe of his Authority. I do not ſay that Almighty God will actually puniſh ſuch a Man as much in degree, as if He had been tried in all other Inſtances, and wilfully ſinned in all: but I know not whether in ſtrict Juſtice He might not. And this I ſay, that a Man's Guilt muſt be in Proportion to his inward Diſpoſition; which, it is manifeſt (all Circumſtances of Inclination and Temptation being ſuppoſed equal) would produce the ſame Behaviour and Practice in *all* Caſes, which it doth in *one*. *Whoſoever* therefore *offends* in *one Point* only, is *guilty of all*, in this Senſe; becauſe He would as certainly yield in *all*, as He doth in *this*, were He to undergo a Tryal, equal in every reſpect, in all other Caſes.

AGAIN, the ſame may be proved, and explained, by the Caſe of ſuch as wilfully tranſgreſs any Humane Law. Would not any Maſter think his Authority, with reſpect to all his Commands, called in queſtion, by a Servant, who ſhould chuſe which He would obey,

obey, and which He would not, merely by his own Humour, or Inclination, or Profit; and wilfully refuſe to obey ſuch a particular juſt and lawful Command, becauſe He had no mind to it; or could get more preſent Advantage by diſobeying it? And would not that Maſter think that the ſame Diſpoſition of Mind in ſuch a Servant would carry him to injure and affront him in all other Inſtances likewiſe, could He propoſe to himſelf the ſame Pleaſure, or Intereſt, by ſo doing? Nay, Would not He ſpeak of him, or treat him, as a Perſon to whom he was obliged for no Service performed out of a Senſe of his Authority, or any farther than his own preſent Intereſt directed him? The ſame may be ſaid of any *Lawful Supreme Powers*, and the *Subjects* under them; who, if they wilfully offend againſt any *one* of their juſt Laws, are in ſome Senſe guilty of *all*: as they rebel againſt the Authority which is the ſame in this Law, as it is in *all* others; and as they would certainly offend againſt *all* others, were they not ſenſible, they could not do it, with the ſame Pleaſure or Profit, the ſame Secrecy or Impunity. And who will reckon the *material Act* of Obedience, in

SERM. VI. any reſpect, a Virtue; when it is ſo certain from other Inſtances, that it had been Diſobedience, had the ſame inviting Circumſtances attending it?

IF therefore, any Perſons do allow themſelves in any one wilful Sin; they may be certain that their *Guilt* reaches beyond this one Sin, as it includes in it a Contempt of that Authority by which other Sins, as well as this, are forbidden; and a Diſpoſition which would end in the Commiſſion of all other Sins, were the ſame Trials offered them in all reſpects. *Whoſoever* therefore *keepeth the whole Law* beſides, *and yet offends in one Point, is*, in this Senſe, *guilty of all. For He that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not ſteal. Now if thou commit no Adultery, yet if thou ſteal, thou art become a Tranſgreſſor of the Law.*

IT ſeems there were in thoſe Days certain unreaſonable Perſons, amongſt the Chriſtians, who were very ready to obey the Law of God in ſuch Inſtances as were agreeable to their Inclination or their Intereſt. But then they deſired leave to hope that they might, for the Sake of this Obedience, be excuſed from obſerving it in ſome other particular

particular **Inſtance**: which to be ſure They would chuſe out for themſelves, according to their own Inclination, and Temper. Thus they would willingly retain a darling Sin; and compound for this, by ſerving God, and obeying his Law, in other Inſtances, in which they did not find ſo much Difficulty. And this, I am perſuaded, is the Caſe of many *Chriſtians* now a-days, who think, if they obſerve the Laws of Chriſt in moſt Inſtances, eſpecially if they be not guilty of open, and notorious Sins, they may indulge themſelves in *one* Vice, which they hope will be atoned for by their Obſervance of the other Evangelical Laws. This Vice they chuſe for themſelves: not being able to find any Allowance made by *God* to one, more than to another. But, in oppoſition to this unchriſtian Humour, and fatal Miſtake, this Affirmation of St. *James* in the Text was deſigned: which I have explained to you; and ſhall now proceed, as I propoſed, in the *ſecond place*,

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II. To lay down the Doctrine plainly taught, or implied, in theſe Words of St. *James:* and to prove the Juſtice, and Reaſonableneſs of it. Now,

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1. THE leaſt that can be implied in them is this, that it is not enough for any Man to obey all the other Laws of God, with a ſilent reſerve of ſo much as one Caſe, in which he allows himſelf wilfully to tranſgreſs; that the Authority of God equally extends to all his Laws; and that refuſal of Obedience in one ſingle Inſtance is a Rebellion againſt that Authority; that it is an *Univerſal Obedience* which God requires, to all his Commands equally, and without Partiality; that Obedience in all Particulars except one ſhall not atone for the wilful Neglect of that one; but that whoſoever doth allow himſelf in one wilful Sin, under this Pretenſe, will find himſelf miſerably miſtaken, and will be judged and puniſhed at laſt, as a Contemner of the Authority of God. This is the leaſt, I ſay, that can be implied in this Declaration of St. *James:* and is no more than what our Lord himſelf declared, *Matth.* vii. 21. where He openly warns all his Diſciples, that nothing can entitle them to an Entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, but the *doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.* But whoſoever wilfully tranſgreſſeth in any *one* Point, certainly

ly cannot be ſaid to do the Will of God, in that Inſtance, tho' He doth it in all others. Beſides, his Will is his *whole Will*, taken all together: and this being a part of it; whoever tranſgreſſeth this part of it, doth not do the *Will*, or the *whole Will*, of God. That Man therefore, cannot, upon the Goſpel Terms, hope for an Admittance into Heaven, who allows himſelf in the habitual Commiſſion of any one known Sin; or in any one wilful Tranſgreſſion of the Will of God. Our *Lord* himſelf hath in thoſe Words put our Title to Heaven upon our ſincere Regard to the whole Will of God, in all its parts: as his *Apoſtle*, in the Text, hath utterly precluded all who pretend to obſerve ſome parts of God's Law, whilſt they wilfully continue in the Neglect of others, from any Hopes of God's Favour. SERM. VI.

2. THE Juſtice and Reaſonableneſs of *God's* requiring this *Univerſal Obedience*, without any Exception to any one Law, or any one part of his Will more than another, is ſo apparent, that every one can ſee it in the Caſe of others, tho' He may be ſo weak as fondly to hope for an Exemption in his own Caſe. Put it to the covetous Man, whether

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whether the Condemnation threatned againſt the more expenſive Vices be not juſt and fitting; who more ready to join in it than himſelf? Put it to the Voluptuary, whether it be not highly reaſonable that the Wrath of God ſhould be reveled, and executed, againſt ſo vile a Crime as Covetouſneſs; and you need not doubt of his Approbation of it. So will the diſhoneſt Man condemn the Uncleanneſs of another; and the unclean condemn the diſhoneſt: every one thinking (if they think at all of ſuch Matters) that any particular Tranſgreſſion of God's Law muſt in reaſon be puniſhed by God; ſo it be not That of which they know themſelves to be guilty, and for which they have their own peculiar Temper, Inclination, or Intereſt, to plead. This indeed they will inwardly except; out of a Self-Love and an Averſion to Miſery: but yet even this they do, only with ſome faint Hope; not with any fixed Judgment, that it will not be highly fitting even for this particular Sin to receive its juſt Reward. But ſuppoſe this were their fixed Judgment in their own Caſe; we know their Judgment is biaſs'd when themſelves are concerned; and much more

more free when it is the Caſe of others a- SERM. VI.
bout which they are to judge.

LET therefore, but the Judgment of Chriſtians be enquired into, about the Caſe of others living but in one known Sin, for which themſelves have no Fondneſs, or Inclination; and you will find them all allowing that this continued Courſe of one particular Sin is a moſt high Provocation to God; a continued Affront to his Authority; and what juſtly deſerves to be puniſhed at laſt, when He ſhall come to judge all Men for their Offenſes againſt him.

BUT, farther, if this *Univerſal Obedience* were not the Condition of Eternal Happineſs; what would Men have to do, but to chuſe out the Vice for which they find the greateſt Fondneſs in themſelves, and that which will be moſt agreeable to them; and give themſelves all that Looſe in this, which can be conſiſtent with the Obſervation of the other Laws of the Goſpel? Nay, where would be the Harm, upon this Suppoſition, if each Man choſe to himſelf Two or Three Darlings out of the whole Catalogue of Sins, to love, and purſue? If God can be ſuppoſed to paſs over the continued wilful Violation

of

SERM. VI. of his Laws in *one* Inſtance, for the ſake of Obedience in others; why not in *Two* Inſtances, if the ſame Excuſe of Inclination, and Temptation, can be pleaded? Thus every Man may have his Idol, ſet up in the ſame Heart in which God places his Temple: and which do you think will have the greateſt Share of Adoration, and Service in this Competition? Why, it is plain that God Almighty can have only that Service which the Idol can ſpare; no more Love, or Obedience, than what is conſiſtent with the Proſecution of this particular Vice now ſuppoſed to be connived at by God. And can any one think it tolerable, to entertain ſuch an Opinion of Almighty God, as makes his Will to truckle to a beloved Sin; and to accept of ſo much Service only as *that* can ſpare, without being neglected it ſelf? Can any one think it pardonable in himſelf to think thus of the wiſe, and holy God, that He can give a Licence after ſuch a manner to any one Vice: much more to think that He can give ſuch Allowance to all Vices.

FOR I muſt obſerve farther, that this Suppoſition would not only be an Allowance to any one particular Vice; but in general

to

to *all*, and every one. For if Almighty God be ſuppoſed to overlook the Covetouſneſs of one Man, for the ſake of any other Virtues; He muſt, by the ſame Reaſon, be ſuppoſed to connive at the Diſhoneſty of another; at the Uncleanneſs of a third; at the Drunkenneſs of a fourth; and ſo conſequently, at the particular Vice to which any particular Perſon hath addicted himſelf. For by the ſame Right that we chuſe our own Vice, which we think to except from his Anger and Condemnation; by the ſame Right, I ſay, another chuſes another Vice, agreeable to his Temper, Inclination, and Opportunities. And by this means not only our darling Vice is excepted; but the darling Vice of every one in particular: which brings in an Encouragement to univerſal Debauchery, and to every Inſtance of Folly, and Wickedneſs. The Adulterers, Fornicators, Drunkards, Swearers, Extortioners, Covetous, Malicious, Revengeful, Backbiters, Envious, Murtherers; all who are expreſsly excluded the *Kingdom* of *Heaven* in the *New Teſtament*, may at this rate entertain Hopes of getting into it by this Artifice: if they can but plead an Obſervance of God's

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SERM. VI. God's Law in other reſpects; and a ſtrong Inclination, and Temptation, to that particular Vice, in which they have indulged themſelves. As unreaſonable then, as it is to ſuppoſe Almighty God to leave room for Hopes of Indulgence, or Pardon, to all manner of Vices, ſo they meet not in *one* Perſon; ſo reaſonable is it to believe that an *Univerſal Obedience*, without Partiality, to all his Laws, is the only Obedience to which He hath annexed the Promiſe of our inheriting Eternal Life.

AGAIN, if this be not the one only Rule for us to go by, in this Affair; we muſt ſuppoſe our ſelves left to our own Government and Guidance, much more than is really conſiſtent with ſuppoſing God to be our Lord, and our Legiſlator. For, according to this Suppoſition, it doth not depend upon Almighty God, what Laws ſhall be obligatory to us; but upon our ſelves, and our own Humour, or Inclination; our Pleaſure, or Profit. For we are to pick and chuſe out of all the Laws, He hath given us, which it is our Pleaſure to neglect; and to except out of all the Sins, which He hath in general condemned, that particular Sin which we

have a mind to indulge. And tho' God hath declared it, amongſt others, to be a damning Sin; yet at this rate we have it in our Power to reverſe this Decree, and to alter the Nature of it: that ſo, what God hath declared pernicious, and fruitful of Miſery, ſhall become, by our own favour to it, of an harmleſs and innocent Nature; only an Inſtance of our Frailty, and a Subject for his future Mercy to exerciſe it ſelf upon. He hath told us, that if we be not Doers of his Will, we muſt expect his Wrath, and Eternal Diſpleaſure: and if this be not ſo, then we are our own Directors, and in great Part out of his Juriſdiction; I mean, if we can frame another Rule for our ſelves, and oppoſe it to his. He commands Obedience to *all* his Laws. We claim a Right to except *one*. He forbids every *Vice*. We pretend a Privilege to retain *one:* and promiſe him, we will be as careful as can be in other Inſtances, if He will overlook this. After this manner, I ſay, we take our ſelves from under his Government; and aſſume a Dominion over our ſelves in ſome Inſtances, equal to what we pretend to allow to him in others. But nothing can be more abſurd than this: SERM. VI.

and

SERM. VI. and consequently, without universal, impartial Obedience, we can have no Hopes to inherit his Rewards, or escape his Punishments.

BUT, last of all, the Supposition of his accepting of an Observance of *some* parts of his Will, from Men who continue in the known Neglect, and wilful Violation, of *others*, is directly contrary to the Design of Christianity; and destructive of the main End of the Gospel. For it was a Regard to universal Holiness; to a more perfect Obedience to the Laws of Righteousness, and a more perfect Freedom from all Sin, that engaged God to send his Son into the World; and that influenced our Lord to undertake his great Work. He appeared to put away and destroy, not one, or two, but all *the Works of the Devil.* His *Grace was reveled to teach Men to deny Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts*; without Exception, and without any Reserve to what might be the peculiar Favourite of any Man. And it is a contradicting this Design; a frustrating this End; if he hath left any Hopes of the Mercy which he purchased, to Those who allow themselves in any one of the Works of the Devil;

Devil; or continue in any ſort of Ungodli- SERM.
neſs; or in any one worldly Luſt. VI.

BESIDES, the Caſe of the Generality, or Bulk, of Mankind being manifeſtly this, that it is one particular darling Sin that enſlaves the Man; that he is devoted to this, and for this often neglects other Sins, as well as his Duty: it was without doubt to engage Men to leave the Sin *which doth ſo eaſily beſet them*; to diſengage them from that Bondage which This kept them in, that the *Son* of *God* appeared in the Fleſh, and inſtituted his holy Religion. I know, there are Men who ſeem, without Diſtinction, to be under the Government and Influence of a whole Body of Sin: to be as covetous, for Inſtance, as is conſiſtent with their other Vices; and as vicious in other reſpects as is conſiſtent with their Covetouſneſs, and worldly Deſigns. But the Caſe of Multitudes is, that it is one Vice which generally enſlaves them ſo much, that they can willingly ſacrifice other Vices, as well as their Virtue, to it. And now put the Caſe, that our Lord can be ſuppoſed to give any Ground for hope of Favour to ſuch Perſons, continuing in this State, upon Condition they do, in other Points,

SERM. VI. obſerve his Laws: and what Good could his coming into the World be ſuppoſed to do, if He brings along with Him any ſuch Indulgence as gives Encouragement, and Strength, to the darling Vice of every Man, who believes in him? Where would be any Endeavours after the *Perfection*, talked of in the Goſpel, and becoming Humane Nature? Where would be the Truth of that Propoſition, that Chriſt came to *call Sinners to Repentance*, and Amendment? How vain muſt his profeſſed Deſign be, and how unworthy of an holy, and wiſe God; if He be ſuppoſed to appear ſo partially in the Cauſe of Virtue? How might the *Heathen Philoſophers* themſelves have boaſted that their own Schemes were more worthy of the Deity? and have drawn an unanſwerable Argument againſt the Divine Authority of an Inſtitution, in which Allowance was given, in effect, to any Sin or Wickedneſs Men would particularly give themſelves up to? But I have ſaid enough upon the preſent Head.

THE remaining part of what I propoſed upon this Subject, I muſt reſerve to another opportunity. But from what hath been ſaid it is evident that, if we would not fix the higheſt

higheſt Abſurdities upon *Almighty God*, and our *Saviour*, and his *Goſpel*; we muſt be firmly perſuaded that it is an *univerſal Obedience* to all his Commands equally, which God requires in order to our Happineſs: and that the continued Allowance of our ſelves in any one wilful Sin, is inconſiſtent with all Hopes of his Mercy, as far as it is revealed and promiſed in his Goſpel. SERM. VI.

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

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St. *JAMES*, ii. 10.

For whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

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IN my laſt Diſcourſe I propoſed,

I. To ſhew you the true meaning of theſe Words.

II. To lay down the Doctrine certainly taught, or implied, in them.

III. To anſwer ſome Queſtions which may ariſe upon this Subject.

IV. To draw ſuch Obſervations and Inferences, from the whole, as may be of uſe, in order to our ſucceſsful Endeavours after Eternal Life.

As

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As to the *firſt* of theſe; I then ſhewed you that one who allows himſelf in the wilful Neglect of any known Duty, or in the wilful Commiſſion of any known Sin, may juſtly be ſaid to be guilty, with reſpect to the other parts of God's Law, as well as this particular Inſtance, as he ſins againſt that Divine Authority by which the whole was enacted; and as the ſinning againſt that Authority in one Inſtance doth imply in it a Neglect and Contempt of it in all others alſo, in which it is of no greater force or account, than it is in this Particular: and likewiſe, as the Diſpoſition of Mind which permits or induceth the Sinner wilfully to tranſgreſs in one Inſtance, would inevitably produce the ſame Effect, in other Inſtances, ſuppoſing all the Circumſtances of Inclination, and Temptation, to be equal.

As to the *ſecond* Head; I ſhewed you that the main Deſign of the Paſſage was to aſſure Men of the Folly of imagining that they could atone for the wilful Violation, and continued Tranſgreſſion, of any one Law of God, by the Obſervation of others: and therefore, that the leaſt that could be intended by St. *James* in it was this, that

SERM. VII. it is an univerſal Obedience to all his Laws which God expects of Chriſtians; that if they think to except any part of his Will from their Obſervation, and that He will excuſe this for the Sake of Obedience to other parts of it, they will find themſelves miſerably deluded; and that nothing can recommend them to his Favour at laſt, but a ſincere, conſtant, and univerſal Obedience to all his Commands, without Partiality, and without Exception; and that upon the Condition of ſuch an Obedience, for the Time to come, any Chriſtian who hath been a Sinner, may hope for his Mercy, thro' *Jeſus Chriſt:* but not without it; as far as we know of his Will declared in the Goſpel. This I ſhewed you to be plain from theſe Words of St. *James*, as well as others of our *Lord* himſelf: and likewiſe from the many Abſurdities following from the contrary Suppoſition. I come now,

III. To conſider ſome Queſtions, and Doubts, which may ariſe upon this Subject.

Now there are Two which preſently offer themſelves to our Thoughts. The *firſt* is this, Whether it doth not follow from what hath been ſaid that Almighty God requires

quires of us a perfect, ſinleſs, Obedience. To which I anſwer, SERM. VII.

1. IT is certain that God requires an Obedience to all, and every of his Commands; at all Times, and in all Places equally: and likewiſe that there is no one Sin, or Tranſgreſſion of his Law, in any one Inſtance, but what He diſapproves of, and abſolutely forbids. And therefore, if our Practice were directed, without Variation, by his Rules; it would be a perfect and ſinleſs Obedience. In this Senſe therefore, it may juſtly be ſaid that He requires a perfect, ſinleſs Obedience at our Hands, free from all wilful Sin. And wilful Sin being that which we could have avoided, if we would; it is certain, He may juſtly forbid, and condemn it in every Inſtance. Nay, this we might be certain of, without any expreſs Revelation, that the ſupreme infallible Underſtanding, the moſt wiſe and holy God, could not but will that every Law of Reaſon ſhould be ſtrictly and conſtantly obſerved by reaſonable Creatures; and could not but condemn all wilful Tranſgreſſions of it, as the moſt unreaſonable and abſurd Practices. But now, ſince this is ſuch an Obedience as was never

SERM. VII. yet actually performed by any Mortal; every Man in the World having found himſelf ſurrounded with Infirmities, and miſled by Temptations and Trials, in ſome Inſtance or other, ſo as that He cannot but confeſs himſelf guilty of ſome wilful Deviation, in ſome Point or other, from the Rule of right Reaſon, and the Will of God; it remains to enquire what *Condeſcenſion* is ſhewn by Almighty God, in the Goſpel, thro' *Jeſus Chriſt*.

2. THEREFORE, it is certain, from the Goſpel, that every wilful Tranſgreſſion of his Law is not unpardonable: for the Deſign of it was to offer Pardon upon ſome Conditions to wilful Sinners. This is very conſiſtent with the former Propoſition: For, as a Father may command ſuch and ſuch Particulars; and yet admit his Son to Reconciliation, upon ſome Terms, after he hath tranſgreſſed any of theſe Commands: ſo likewiſe may Almighty God require Obedience to every one of his Commands, at all Times, and in all Places; and yet, after any have been ſo unhappy as wilfully to tranſgreſs any of his commands, He may forgive them theſe Tranſgreſſions, upon ſome certain Terms,

Terms, and Conditions. It is, therefore, certain that Almighty God forbids every Sin always, and enjoins the Practice of every Virtue at all Opportunities; and in this Senſe may be ſaid to require a ſinleſs Obedience: and it is as certain that there is room left, by his open Declarations, for Favour and Mercy to ſuch as have wilfully committed Sin. It appears, therefore, SERM. VII.

3. THAT the Perfection, which is ſo required of Chriſtians, as that they ſhall not be made happy at laſt without it, is Amendment and Reformation in thoſe Inſtances in which they have wilfully failed; and a conſtant Progreſs in Virtue and well-doing. This State of the *Caſe* at once guards againſt that comfortleſs Doctrine, on the one hand, that God will inſiſt at laſt upon that ſpotleſs and abſolute Perfection which never was yet known in a Mortal: and againſt that fatal Miſtake, on the other hand, that He will accept Sinners to Mercy, for the Sake of Chriſt, tho' they have no Signs in their Lives and Behaviour, of their hearty Repentance, and Deteſtation of Sin.

THE Perfection required of Man, in a State of Trial and Probation, cannot be a

State

SERM. VII. State uncapable of Improvement: becauſe this ſeems not attainable in ſuch a State by ſuch a Creature; or, at leaſt, never was actually attained by any. And who, according to this Rule, ſuppoſing this to be required, could come to any well-grounded Hopes of Happineſs? For who in his Senſes can think himſelf at any time ſo good, ſo perfectly free from every thing evil, as He might poſſibly be? But it muſt conſiſt in a daily Progreſs, and ſincere Endeavour, after Perfection; in an increaſing Conqueſt over what is evil in us; and in a daily acquiring more and more of thoſe good Qualities, in which we can think our ſelves defective. This progreſſive Motion in the Paths of Virtue, and this increaſing Conqueſt over Sin, will ſufficiently demonſtrate the ſincere Repentance of a Sinner; and will be a good Foundation in his breaſt, for Hope and Comfort.

IN this Senſe therefore, God requires univerſal Obedience to all his Commands equally; and inſiſts upon it as a Condition without which we ſhall not be happy at laſt; that in what Inſtances ſoever we have in Time paſt offended, in *theſe* He expects us for the future to amend; that in what Points ſoever

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ſoever of the Law of Righteouſneſs we are defective, He abſolutely requires an Improvement in them; a Progreſs, or growing, in all that is good; a departure, or flying, from every thing that we know to be evil. He will beſtow no Happineſs upon thoſe who go on to allow themſelves in any one known Tranſgreſſion of his Law, till Death overtakes them; nor doth He in the Goſpel give us Ground to entertain any Hopes, that they ſhall ever experience his Favour, or be put upon the Level with ſuch as by patient Continuance in well-doing ſeek after Glory and Immortality.

THIS, therefore, is a ſufficient Anſwer to the *firſt Queſtion*, concerning the Obedience required to all God's Commands; that it cannot be ſo underſtood as if He would not make any happy who had not arrived in this World at a State of *abſolute Perfection* and Freedom from every degree of Sin, or moral Evil: but muſt be underſtood thus, that He doth abſolutely require of all who know themſelves to have been in any reſpect *wilfull Sinners*, that they do ſincerely ſet about the Work of Amendment; and demonſtrate their Sincerity by getting Ground of

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of their Vices; by proceeding to greater degrees of Vertue; and by going ſtill more and more towards the Perfection of rational Creatures; at leaſt, till they are out of the Power and Dominion of any known Sin; and till they are in ſuch meaſure poſſeſſed of the contrary Virtue, as to be juſtly denominated virtuous in that Inſtance in which they know they have been vicious. This is a State of Perfection to which the meaneſt Chriſtian may arrive; if He knows but what Virtue and Vice mean. This is that Condition of our Acceptance, that Law of the Goſpel, which will admit of no Abatements at the great Day. And it is an invaluable Mercy, that God will accept of this Progreſs, and Improvement in Virtue, inſtead of a State of blameleſs Perfection.

THE *ſecond Queſtion* which offers itſelf, now we have been ſpeaking of the *Terms* of *Favour* propoſed in the *Goſpel*, and the Conditions of our Acceptance at laſt, is this, How we ſhall be able to form a good Judgment concerning our own Condition; or to know when we are in ſuch Circumſtances, as to be able to have a well-grounded Hope unto Eternal Life.

WHAT

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WHAT I have ſaid concerning the *laſt Queſtion* will help us in the reſolving this to our own Satisfaction: but I ſhall not refer to that; but be a little more particular. I am ſenſible, indeed, that many deſire to know exactly what is barely enough for their Happineſs, for fear they ſhould do too much for themſelves; not out of any Love to Virtue; but indeed out of Love to Vice, which they would gladly retain ſomething of, if they could with any Safety. This I believe, is impoſſible to be defined exactly, ſo as to ſuit all Caſes: God having never declared what is the loweſt Pitch of Holineſs that He will accept of at laſt. And I cannot but think it wiſely concealed from Men; that ſo Sincerity may be encouraged, and a Love to Virtue, which ſeems impoſſible to conſiſt with the Notions of ſuch Inquirers; that ſo the more may depend upon Men's own Integrity; and leaſt the general Progreſs in the Paths of Virtue ſhould be more ſtinted than it is already: it being too probable that moſt Men would be content to place themſelves juſt out of Danger, rather than to make any large Progreſs in the Ways of Righteouſneſs. For there is a great deal of difference

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rence between the Love of future Happineſs, and the Fear of future Miſery; and much more in the latter that moves the Actions of moſt Men, than in the former; and Ground enough for Suſpicion, that if Men could but ſecure themſelves from Puniſhment in the Life to come, they would ſtop juſt at that Pitch which they knew would do that, and not greedily aſpire after ſuch Degrees of Virtue as would carry them to great Heighths of Happineſs. But tho' it be impoſſible to ſatisfy all the Inquiries of ſuch Perſons, as theſe; who indeed cannot be in a ſafe way, whilſt they are of a Temper ſo little a-kin to Sincerity, and a ſerious Love of Religion: yet it may be poſſible to offer ſuch Conſiderations as may help other more truly ſincere Chriſtians to judge whether they have Ground to hope that they themſelves are ſo diſpoſed, and ſo free from Sin, as to be within the Covenant of Grace and Mercy, the Conditions of which I have, in ſome former Diſcourſes, been repreſenting and explaining to you.

HE therefore, who makes no other uſe of the gracious Propoſals of the Goſpel, but to encourage himſelf to recover from any Sin,

Sin, of which He knows he hath wilfully been guilty; and is ſo affected by any Inſtance of his paſt Weakneſs, as to keep a greater and ſtricter Watch over himſelf for the Time to come; He, who at any time finds, upon a review of himſelf, that, tho' He be not abſolutely perfect, yet, He gets Ground of his Imperfections, and proceeds, by a daily Courſe, farther and farther, in the Paths of Virtue; He, who carefully avoids the Opportunities and Temptations, by which He knows He hath formerly fallen; may reaſonably conclude that He is truly ſenſible of the Importance of Holineſs, and of the Neceſſity of forſaking his Vices, and ſincerely diſpoſed to practiſe the one, and relinquiſh the other. He, who when He unavoidably, and without any Fault of his own, meets with the ſame Trials, and Temptations, which have formerly vanquiſhed him, finds his Belief of a future State and Senſe of his Duty ſtrong enough to vanquiſh them, and reſiſt all their Arts and Force, hath good ground to Hope that He is in a Way acceptable to God. SERM. VII.

In ſome Caſes, the Rule for this Judgment is ſo manifeſt that it cannot be miſtaken,

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ken. He who hath robb'd or cheated his Neighbour, after any manner; whether by the Smiles of a Friend, or the Force of an Enemy; cannot but know whether He hath, or hath not, made Reſtitution, to the uttermoſt of his Power, of whatſoever He hath thus obtained by Fraud, or Force. This is what removes the Guilt of that Injuſtice: and without this it is impoſſible He can think that He comes up to the *Terms* of *Acceptance*, or is in a ſafe Way to Happineſs. So likewiſe, in all other ſorts of perſonal Injuries, whether reſpecting the Reputation, or Quiet, of our Neighbour; He who doth to his utmoſt make Amends for the Damage received, comes up to the *Terms* of *Acceptance*, as far as this Crime is concerned. So that in this Caſe it is too eaſy to judge, for Men to pretend an Evaſion. In fine, *He* is certainly in a ſafe Way, who, in this State, which, as I ſaid, is not a State of abſolute but of increaſing Perfection in Virtue, is ever ſtudying what He hath to ſubdue in himſelf, and is always ſubduing it by the Power of Religion.

ON the contrary; He, who takes Encouragement before ſinning from the Doctrine of

of Acceptance and Reconciliation, delivered in the Goſpel, to venture ſtill farther in the Paths of Sin, with a fooliſh Hope of coming up to the *Terms* of that *Acceptance* ſome time or other, is as yet in a very unſafe Condition; without any the leaſt Ground of Hope from thoſe Terms of Favour which He thus abuſes to his own vile Purpoſes. He, who finds himſelf led by his ſinning at any time, rather to love the Sin, than to deteſt and guard againſt it; rather to run to the Temptation, than to fly from it, hath too much reaſon to ſuſpect his own Caſe. He, who finds his Senſe of the Importance of Morality and Virtue diminiſhing, and the Power of the World, or the Fleſh, increaſing over him, ſo far that he is ſtill every Day carried by their Allurements, or Affrightments, into the Practice of Sin, may be ſure that he is rather laying up for himſelf the Matter of a terrible Repentance to come, than truly repenting at this time of any thing paſt. He, who keeps Poſſeſſion of what he hath unjuſtly obtained; or refuſes to do right, or make Reſtitution, to his Neighbour whom he hath injured; how deep ſoever his Sorrow, how many ſoever

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SERM. VII. his Tears may be, is far from the Way of God, or any well-grounded Hopes of Salvation, upon the *Goſpel-Terms*. In a word, He, who finds within himſelf that his Virtue grows leſs, and his Paſſions increaſe in Strength; that he is ſo far from getting Ground of them, that they get Ground of him every Day, is in the worſt Condition we can well imagine. And He, who finds that he is a Captive to any one wilful Sin; that he hath not yet made any ſucceſsful Warfare againſt it; that he hath not yet got out of its Power; that his Faith in God, his Senſe of Religion, his Belief of a future State, are not ſufficient to diſengage him from it; but that it keeps its Ground, and is too hard for the Reſiſtance of his Virtue, may be ſure that He is not yet in ſuch a Condition, as that He may at all depend upon the Favour of God, promiſed in the Goſpel to returning Sinners; having not yet made himſelf any more obedient to his whole Will than He hath been in Time paſt.

THESE Particulars I have laid down briefly: but hope the Conſciences of all, who are any ways concerned, will apply what hath been ſaid to their own particular Caſes;

Caſes; without any ſuch fooliſh Partiality as may endanger their own Eternal Salvation. But if they will not act ſincerely with themſelves, when themſelves only are concerned, and when Almighty God hath ſhewn ſuch a tender Regard to their Intereſt; but, on the contrary, will endeavour, and labour hard, to put a Cheat upon their own Souls: how wonderfully ſtrange is this? and how little Thanks will they owe themſelves, when they come to feel the Effect of ſo wilful a Deluſion! After having ſpoken to theſe *Two Queſtions*, I come now, in the laſt place, as I propoſed, SERM. VII.

IV. To draw ſuch Obſervations and Inferences from the whole, as may be of uſe to us in our ſucceſsful Endeavours after Eternal Life. Theſe are ſuch as our Thoughts, I hope, have been naturally led into already by my paſt Diſcourſes; and will often run into, when we come to retire, and to conſider of our true and eternal Intereſt. The Time will now permit me to mention but Two or Three. As,

1. FROM the very Words of St. *James* in the Text, and the loweſt Senſe in which they can be underſtood, as well as from the

SERM. VII. Abſurdity which I have ſhewn in the contrary Suppoſition, it is evident that, upon the Goſpel Terms, there is no ſuch thing as atoning for the Neglect of one Virtue by the Performance of others; nay, nor by the Performance of every other Virtue.

2. FROM what hath been ſaid let every one obſerve, that it is not Inclination, or Cuſtom, that can excuſe or bear them out in the continued Commiſſion of Sin; or in the repeated Neglect of any known Duty. For God excepts no Sin from his Condemnation; no Duty out of his Commands. He requires all equally, as we have ſeen: and to pretend to exempt our ſelves, is to put our ſelves out of his Juriſdiction, and Government; and to ſet our Humour and Inclination above his Law, and Authority. Yet how many Men do we meet with, who are apt to think their own Sin, to which they are moſt inclined, and moſt eaſily ſeduced, to be out of the Number of the condemned Vices; or elſe to hope that God will depart from his ſettled Rules, on purpoſe to releaſe their Puniſhment. They will pray, and hear; and perhaps receive the Sacrament; and do ſeveral good Actions, to the end that their Inclina-

Inclination may be allowed of by God Almighty: and as long as they do what they have no great Temptation to allure them from doing; or omit that Sin to which they are under no ſtrong Bias; they fooliſhly imagine that their Inclination and Bias to another Sin will be Excuſe enough for their Darling and Boſom Vice. But, if St. *James* ſays true, they who are, in one Inſtance, Tranſgreſſors, are Sinners againſt all the Law, and the whole Authority by which it was enacted. SERM. VII.

3. LET the very beſt of us be led, by what hath been ſaid, to look narrowly into our ſelves, and to ſee whether there be not ſome latent Root of Vice in us; ſome ſecret and leſs obſerved Inſtance, in which we tranſgreſs the Will of God. The Chriſtian World is come to that paſs, that He who is not guilty of open Acts of notorious Sin, Drunkenneſs, Adultery, Blaſphemy, Revenge, or the like, paſſeth for a good Chriſtian: and many think it well with them, becauſe they cannot accuſe themſelves of ſuch Sins. And ſo far indeed it is well. But alas! Though they be not thus openly lewd, and profligate: yet perhaps, there remains

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ſomething in them that requires, and is worthy of, a Cure. They are not Swearers, or Drunkards, or Unclean, or Profane: but perhaps, a ſilent Diſcontent eats thro' their Hearts; a ſecret grudging and repining diſcompoſeth their Nights and Days; Envy gnaws upon them; or ſome Paſſion or other torments, and holds them Captive. Some Imperfection or other we may find, if we turn our Eyes more to what we have of Evil in us, than to what we have not. And here lies the Buſineſs of every Chriſtian, to conquer his own proper Enemy. If we have no very great ones; if we be out of the Reach and Power of the moſt formidable: the more Shame and Ignominy, to be led captive and ſpoiled by thoſe of leſs Strength, and leſs Account. Let us not think it beneath us to exert our ſelves againſt the leaſt of God's Enemies, and our own. Since 'tis a Progreſs towards Perfection that is required of us; let us think and act, as if we thought it our Duty to make this Progreſs.

IF, thro' the Happineſs of a good Diſpoſition, and careful Education, we have eſcaped thoſe Pollutions under which ſo many in the World groan; let us thank God: and

let

let us remember that it is from hence that we are to begin our Race; that we have not thoſe Impediments which others have created to themſelves by a long Courſe of wilful Sin; and that we have Incitements, and Encouragements from hence, as well as Obligation, to attempt the greater Heighths of Religion and Virtue. By Religion here I do not mean Devotion, and Prayer; which yet are of admirable Uſe, and of great Neceſſity: but the greater Degrees of all that is good; the more ſure Conqueſt over all our Paſſions; the more quiet Poſſeſſion of our Souls in Patience; the more profound Submiſſion to God's Will, and to all the Diſpenſations of his Providence; the more compoſed Reſignation of our ſelves to his good Pleaſure; the bringing down every Imagination which raiſeth it ſelf againſt him; the ſubduing every undue Tendency in us towards worldly Ambition, Honour, or Riches; the quieting every turbulent Motion in our Breaſts; the taking off more and more the Edge of the Mind from all ſenſual Enjoyments; the Diſcovery, and gradual Amendment, of the leaſt Diſlocations, the leaſt irregular Movements, the moſt ſecret Diſorders of our Wills SERM. VII.

SERM. VII. and Affections. This is the Task of a Chriſtian, who is paſt the Danger of being immerſed in open Vice and Profaneneſs: to go on from Strength to Strength; from one Degree to another; from one Branch of Perfection to another; till He is called for by God into a State of greater Perfection. And whoever will ſeriouſly look into themſelves, will find Inſtances enough of Imperfection; in the amending of which they will ſhew a ſincere Intention to pleaſe God, and give themſelves a greater Hope of his Mercy than they could otherwiſe have.

BUT laſt of all, let none of us increaſe our own Miſery by ſuch a Baſeneſs of Temper, as ungratefully to abuſe the Mercy of God, offered us upon the *Terms* of the *Goſpel*, to the Purpoſes of Sin and Wickedneſs. This is a Sin of a deep Hue; and what will indeed be the greateſt Aggravation of our continuing in our Vices. God offers us, for the ſake of his Son, to receive us to Favour, returning to him; and ſincerely practiſing his whole Will for the future, without any Partiality, or Neglect of any part of it. It is a ſervile and ignominious Diſpoſition, for which no Name is bad enough, to take occaſion

caſion from the Offer of Mercy to which univerſal Amendment and Holineſs is at any time entitled, to defer our Amendment and Holineſs. The only generous Way; the only ſecure Way for our own Intereſt, (which we pretend to be ſo dear to us;) is immediately and without Delay to endeavour to come up to his *Terms*, that we may obtain his Promiſes; to work out our Salvation *while the Day laſteth: becauſe the Night cometh* (we know not how ſoon) *when no Man can work.* Thus ſhall we find the Way to *Eternal Life*, before it be hid from our Eyes: which God grant we may! *&c.* SERM. VII.

SER-

Concerning the Terms of Acceptance, &c.

SERMON VIII.

HEBREWS x. 26, 27.

For if we ſin wilfully, after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin: but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery Indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſaries.

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HAVE, in ſeveral Diſcourſes, ſhewn you, from plain and unconteſtable Paſſages of the *New Teſtament*, what thoſe *Terms* and *Conditions* are, upon which *Almighty God* will finally pardon, accept, and juſtify, thoſe profeſſed Chriſtians, who have been, in any Senſe, or any Degree, *wilful Sinners:* and in my laſt Diſcourſe I ſumm'd them up in that one Condition of *ſincere*,

ſincere, *univerſal*, and *impartial Obedience* to all the Laws of God, without Exception; or a real and ſenſible Amendment of their Lives and Tempers, in all thoſe Inſtances, in which they know themſelves to have tranſgreſſed any of his Commandments. In order ſtill more to confirm the Truth of what hath been ſaid upon this Subject, I deſign to conſider particularly thoſe ſeveral Schemes, and various Hopes, which the Imaginations of Men have framed to themſelves, more agreeable to their own Humours, and Inclinations; in Oppoſition to theſe ſettled Conditions of God's Favour. SERM. VIII.

BUT, before I ſet about this, it will be very proper to take notice of another ſort of Miſtake in this important Affair, equally contradictory to what I have already laid down; equally fatal to ill-diſpoſed Minds; and very troubleſome and afflictive to many well-meaning and honeſt Chriſtians: and that is, the Opinion that their Caſe, as well as the Caſe of all profeſſed Chriſtians who have been at any time *wilful Sinners*, is ſo ſad and deſperate, that it is in vain for them to hope for Pardon and Reconciliation, upon any Terms; even tho' they ſhould heartily

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ly endeavour to come up to the *Conditions* I have heretofore laid down. Theſe are of a differing ſort, and of a differing Temper, from the moſt of their Neighbours. And their Opinion is pretended to be founded upon ſome *Texts* of the *New Teſtament*, which ſeem to ſpeak of the Irremiſſibleneſs of ſome Sins, which perhaps they fancy themſelves to have been guilty of; and particularly upon this Paſſage, now read to you: which, taken by it ſelf, and ſeparated from the Context and manifeſt Scope of the Writer of this *Epiſtle*, ſeems to conclude, in general, againſt all Hope of Pardon to ſuch as have ſinned wilfully after the receiving and profeſſing the Chriſtian Religion.

IN Oppoſition to ſuch Imaginations, (which render all that I have before advanced of none effect) I ſhall not confine my View to this one Text of the *New Teſtament:* but I ſhall have regard to ſeveral others, which have been, in the ſame manner, miſtaken and miſapplied; as well as to ſome Conſiderations taken from the Nature of God, and the End of the Goſpel; deſigning

I. To

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I. To ſhew the great Abſurdity of fixing upon Almighty God, or the Chriſtian Religion, any ſuch Opinion as that all Hope of Pardon is cut off, in the *Goſpel*, from Any *Chriſtians* who have been *wilful Sinners*. And

II. To conſider particularly the Intent of thoſe miſtaken Texts; and the Impoſſibility of fairly fixing upon them any ſuch Opinion as this.

AND theſe Points I think it very uſeful to explain. For tho' the Generality of profeſſed Chriſtians are more apt to preſume upon the Goodneſs and Mercy of God; and to interpret all Texts of Scripture concerning that, ſo much in their own Favour as to receive ſome Support from them, even whilſt they wilfully continue in their Sins: yet, ſince there are, on one hand, ſome others who may, from a pretended Deſpair of God's Mercy, go on to increaſe the Number of their Tranſgreſſions; and, on the other hand, ſome weak, tho' honeſt, Chriſtians, who have been brought to the melancholy Condition of thinking themſelves, without any Ground, to be ſuch ſort of Sinners as have forfeited all Title to God's fu-

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ture Mercy; it is very neceſſary to conſider this Point, that ſo the Uneaſineſs of the latter, which is only their preſent Unhappineſs; and the Deſpair of the former, which is their Crime (as it is founded upon their Deſire to continue in their Sins;) may be removed; and ſome Stop put to ſuch deſtructive Imaginations. Nor can it be amiſs for us to deſcend, as near as we can, to the Wants and Occaſions of all ſorts of Perſons; to conſider the Scruples of ſome, as well as the Preſumption of others; and to accommodate our Teaching ſometimes to the more rare and ſecret Caſes, as well as at other times to the more known and common. Nay, it is indeed neceſſary, in order to place beyond all reaſonable Doubt what I have heretofore laid down, to handle this Subject: that ſo it may appear, not only that the *Terms* of God's Favour which I have pointed out, are the only *Terms* upon which He hath promiſed Acceptance; but that there is no reaſon to think but that all profeſſed Chriſtians may be ſure of Acceptance, upon coming up to thoſe Terms, whatſoever their former Condition hath been. To return,

I. I SHALL now endeavour to ſhew the great Abſurdity of fixing upon Almighty God, and the Chriſtian Religion, any ſuch Opinion, as that before mentioned. SERM. VIII.

1. IT is extremely abſurd to ſuppoſe that Almighty God, in condeſcending to make Terms with his Creatures, in the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, ſhould not propoſe ſome Method of Reconciliation to all thoſe who ſin after they have received that Religion, as well as to thoſe who had been Sinners before their believing: becauſe no Man, tho' never ſo hearty and ſincere in his Profeſſion of that Religion, is thereby made ſo infallible, that nothing ſhall ever impoſe upon his Judgment; or ſo well-guarded and reſolute as that nothing ſhall be able to ſurprize, or entice, his Will into a Conſent to Sin, in any poſſible Inſtance. It may be true that a Chriſtian hath ſuch a Power, and ſo much Strength, and that He is ſo free from an abſolute Neceſſity of committing any one ſingle wilful Sin, that He may poſſibly, by Watchfulneſs, and Conſideration, and a perpetual Care over himſelf, prevent this. But it is true likewiſe that this is ſo very difficult, that the Experience and Confeſſion of all the beſt Men,

in

SERM. VIII. in all Ages, have demonſtrated that this ſinleſs Obedience was never performed in Fact.

THERE is indeed a vaſt difference, and in the Opinion of the World a greater ſometimes than is juſt, between Sins: which hath induced ſome Men perhaps to think themſelves more free from Sin than they really are. Some are apt to imagine, becauſe they do not permit themſelves to be guilty of Drunkenneſs, or Adultery, or Fornication, or Murther, or Covetouſneſs, or Diſhoneſty in their Dealings, that therefore they are clean. But they often forget the Thoughts of Pride and Haughtineſs; of Revenge and Implacability; of Severity and Ill-nature; of Envy and Malice; of Anger and Paſſion; of Ambition and worldly Grandeur; the frequent Miſpence of their precious Time, and the like: in one, or more, of which, they have, ſome time or other, in ſome degree or other, too certainly indulged themſelves more than they can anſwer for at the Bar of Juſtice. Too certainly, I ſay: for, Is there a perfect Man upon Earth? Is there one, who hath not one weak Side? who hath been always ſo ſtrictly upon his Guard as that He can ſay, He hath reſiſted all Temptations to every

every ſort, and every degree of Sin? It hath been often obſerved to you, that Men are too apt to paſs over the Conſideration of that particular Vice to which they have found themſelves inclined; eſpecially, if it be not of the Number of thoſe which are called ſcandalous and notorious Crimes: Whereas ſome of theſe I have now mentioned, do in truth defile the Soul; hinder the Perfection of Virtue; render the Man as truly obnoxious to the Divine Anger; and as truly oppoſe the Deſign of Chriſtianity, as ſome of the former ſort; and therefore ought to be eſteemed as Sins, and acknowledged as ſuch by all Chriſtians. SERM. VIII.

I BELIEVE, therefore, it may be truly affirmed that there neither is, nor ever was, a Chriſtian, who hath not, in ſome Inſtance or other, ſuffered himſelf to be carried beyond the Bounds of ſtrict Religion, particularly of the Chriſtian Inſtitution; ſo as that He muſt acknowledge himſelf, to the great Judge of the World, and Knower of Hearts, to be, in ſome degree or other, a wilful Sinner after the Reception of Chriſtianity. St. *Paul* indeed, after his Converſion to the Chriſtian Religion, and his Labours in the

SERM. VIII. Work of the Goſpel, doth ſay, that He is conſcious to himſelf of nothing for which He can condemn himſelf, 1 *Cor.* iv. 4. for that is the meaning of thoſe Words, *I know nothing by myſelf.* But He doth not mean this in any other Senſe, to be ſure, but this, that in the main He had performed his Office after ſuch a manner, as that He had good Ground to hope for the Favour of God, and the Rewards of Heaven: which Aſſurance others likewiſe may arrive at. That He could intend by this to ſignify that, in any ſingle Inſtance either of Thought, Word, or Deed; either conſider'd as an *Apoſtle*, or as a private Chriſtian; He had nothing to accuſe himſelf of; is a Suppoſition without all Ground. For He doth not appear to have had ſuch an Opinion of himſelf: and particularly ſeems to have acknowledged himſelf in an haſty and indecent Paſſion before the High-prieſt, *Acts* xxiii. 3. for the Words cannot be underſtood to mean leſs than that. Nor indeed doth He extend the Expreſſion, 1 *Cor.* iv. 4. to himſelf in all Capacities: but is there conſidering himſelf particularly as called to, and executing, the Work of an *Apoſtle*. St. *Peter* once thought it abſolutely

lutely impoſſible that any worldly Conſider- SERM. VIII.
ation could bring him to a Denial of his *Maſter*, after all the convincing Evidences, to which He had been witneſs, of his being the true *Meſſiah*: and yet, the ſame Night in which He ſhewed this Confidence, He ſhewed his Weakneſs alſo.

THIS, therefore, being undoubtedly true, that no Chriſtian, ſince the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, hath actually ſo fulfilled the Law of Chriſt, as to be entirely free from all Sin either of *Omiſſion*, or *Commiſſion*; either in Thought, or Word, or Deed: I ſay, it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that Almighty God would leave no room in ſuch a Diſpenſation, for the Recovery and Reconciliation of wilful Sinners, after their believing the Goſpel; without which there could be no Salvation obtained. This would be to bring Men into ſuch a Diſpenſation as muſt only affright and terrify ſome, and throw others into a more profligate Courſe of Sin than they were in, before their believing in Chriſt. This is to ſuppoſe Almighty God calling the World ſolemnly to the Knowledge of the Goſpel; deſcending to treat with his Creatures, in order to beſtow his Mercy upon them after

SERM. VIII. an extraordinary manner: and that the Effect of this Condeſcenſion is, that the ſincereſt Believer that ever embraced his Call to the Chriſtian Faith, cannot have any Hopes of Pardon, if He hath once after that wilfully tranſgreſſed any of his Laws. And what is this but to publiſh a Religion to the World, which hath no Effect towards making any of the Sons of Men happy; but indeed, upon this ſuppoſition, makes them all much more miſerable, in the End, than they would have been without it.

SOME Men have made it a great Objection againſt the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, that he ſhould promulgate, after ſuch a manner, ſuch a Religion as that of Jeſus Chriſt; when He foreſaw that ſo many, who have it in their Power to do otherwiſe, would live ſo unworthily of it, in the Practice of groſs, and notorious Sins. But the Love of God, in anſwer to this Objection, is ſufficiently ſeen in the unſpeakable Benefit which the better ſort receive from this Inſtitution; and in the Proof which that affords us that others might receive the ſame, were they not extremely wanting to themſelves. But the preſent Suppoſition takes away all Hopes, even from the moſt ſincere Believer,

of

of acquitting himſelf ſo as to obtain God's Favour at laſt. For the Weakneſs of all Chriſtians, in ſome Inſtance or other, proving ſuch a Difficulty of abſolute Perfection, as no Chriſtian ever yet conquered; this Suppoſition repreſents Almighty God as inſtituting a Religion entirely fruitleſs and ineffectual. Which is ſo great an Abſurdity, that from hence it may certainly be concluded that there is a Method of Pardon and Reconciliation for thoſe who have wilfully ſinned after their receiving the Chriſtian Religion. And this with reſpect to all ſorts of wilful Sinners in that Religion: becauſe, as it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that God ſhould not mean and ſpeak Conſolation to the better ſort of Chriſtians; ſo, on the other hand, it is equally abſurd to ſuppoſe that He ſhould, by cutting off all Hopes of Favour on any Terms, urge and force the worſe ſort of Chriſtians into a more reſolute and uninterrupted Proſecution of their Vices. And this brings me to another Conſideration, *viz.* SERM. VIII.

2. THAT, as the contrary Opinion, is, in it ſelf, abſurd and ſhocking; ſo, it is expreſly contrary to the declared Deſign of the Goſpel: which is, that all Sinners ſhould be

SERM. VIII. called and invited to Repentance and Reformation; and that Virtue ſhould have an Encouragement annexed to it, ſufficient to work upon Men to forſake Vice, and return to the Practice of their Duty. But now, this End could not poſſibly be anſwered, if it were certain that, if once Men arrived to ſuch a Pitch of Wickedneſs, they ſhould never be accepted by Almighty God, even tho' they ſhould forſake it for the Time to come. For, as I obſerved in a former Diſcourſe, the Certainty of this, nay, the probable Suſpicion of this, would incline all Sinners, eſpecially habitual Sinners, to ſtrengthen themſelves in their Sins; and to take Courage from their Deſpair of Mercy, or of any other ſort of Happineſs, to take as much as they poſſibly could of the Pleaſures of a Courſe of all manner of Sin; and ſo to engage themſelves, more inextricably than ever, in a vicious Habit of Life.

BUT becauſe ſome have built ſo pernicious an Opinion, not upon the Reaſonableneſs of the thing it ſelf; or upon the main End and Deſign of Chriſtianity; but upon ſome particular Texts and Paſſages of the *New Teſtament*; and argued from them, againſt

againſt the Acceptance of ſome Sinners, who are profeſſed Chriſtians, upon any Terms whatſoever: I ſhall now therefore, in order to remedy the Miſchief of ſuch a Miſtake, SERM. VIII.

II. ENDEAVOUR to ſhew that theſe Paſſages of the *New Teſtament* prove not the Point, for which they are alledged. And of theſe Paſſages I ſhall take particular Notice of *Three*; upon which the whole of the preſent Debate entirely depends.

1. THE *firſt* is that Paſſage, recorded in the *Goſpels*, in which our Saviour ſpeaks of *ſinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt*; and declares it unpardonable; particularly, *Matth.* xii. 31, 32: which ſome well-meaning Chriſtians have been ſo unkind to themſelves, as, in their deſponding Minutes, to apply to their own Caſe. The particular handling all the Circumſtances of this important Paſſage would require a long Diſcourſe on purpoſe. But all that is neceſſary to my preſent Deſign is to ſhew that the Sin there ſpoken of, is a Sin in which ſuch Perſons, as we are now ſpeaking of, cannot poſſibly be concerned. For whatever it was that was there intended by our Lord; this is manifeſt, that He ſpeaks to, and of, ſuch

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Perſons as themſelves ſaw the Courſe and Series of his wonderful Works; and did, out of mere Malice, and an incorrigible Diſpoſition of Mind, aſcribe all that He did to the Power of evil Spirits: tho' there was not the leaſt Sign of that, but manifeſt Demonſtration that He was acting directly againſt the Intereſt of all evil Spirits. It is upon this Occaſion, and of ſuch ſort of Sinners, that He there ſpeaks. And from hence it appears that, whatever the Nature and Malignity of that Sin was, it cannot be a Sin which it is poſſible for any Perſons to commit, who profeſs Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and believe Him to have been ſent into the World by God; nay, nor for any who did not themſelves ſee with their own Eyes his mighty Works, and, out of mere Malice and Perverſeneſs, aſcribe them to the Devil. It follows therefore that, ſuppoſing the *Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt* (whatever be the full Nature of it) to be unpardonable; (which probably muſt ariſe from the perverſe Diſpoſition of Mind from which it proceeds, uncapable of Alteration for the better, and not from any Reſolution of Almighty God never to pardon it upon ſuch Alteration for the better;)

better ;) ſuppoſing, I ſay, this Sin unpardonable: yet it follows from what hath been ſaid that, notwithſtanding this, the wilful Sins of all who profeſs Faith in Jeſus Chriſt may be pardoned, upon ſome Terms; and that they may be capable of coming up to thoſe Terms. For it appears that no profeſſed Chriſtian, or ſincere Believer in Jeſus Chriſt, is capable of being guilty of this Sin: and it is of *Chriſtians*, who have been, or are, wilful Sinners, that we are now diſcourſing. This is fully ſufficient for our preſent Purpoſe, concerning this Paſſage about *ſinning againſt the Holy Ghoſt, viz.* That profeſſed Chriſtians are not, and cannot be, concerned in it. SERM. VIII.

2. THE ſecond Paſſage I ſhall mention, is that in the *Sixth* Chapter of the *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, from v. 4. to v. 7. For *it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted the heavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again to Repentance: ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an*

SERM. VIII. *open Shame:* concerning which *Paſſage*, I have the following Obſervations to offer.

1. THIS is ſpoken only of a wilful and open Apoſtacy from the Faith of Chriſt, and a publick Denial of Jeſus Chriſt, perſiſted in for ſome Time: and this Apoſtacy is the Apoſtacy of ſuch Perſons as had taſted, and been endowed with, ſome of the miraculous Gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, ſeen in thoſe firſt Days; and had been Witneſſes to the great and wonderful Gifts which others in the Church likewiſe enjoyed, and to all the Wonders of the *Goſpel-Age*, called here by a Jewiſh Phraſe, *the World*, or Age, *to come*. Theſe are the Perſons, and this is the falling away, here ſpoken of: and ſuch a falling away it is, as may juſtly be ſaid to be, in effect, an Acquittance of thoſe who crucified our Lord; and a joining with the Infidel World in bringing a publick Shame upon Him, and his Religion. This then is vaſtly different from the Caſe of any who are ſtill profeſſed Chriſtians; and cannot poſſibly be applied to any, who have not, by open Apoſtacy, fallen from a State of ſuch Gifts, and ſuch Powers, and ſuch Illuminations.

2. THE

2. THE Impoſſibility of the Acceptance of ſuch Perſons is not here fixed upon any Reſolution, on the part of Almighty God, not to accept them; ſhould they again ſincerely turn to Him and come up to his Terms: but it is declared to ariſe from the Impoſſibility of ſuch Perſons ever recovering themſelves, ſo as to come up to the Terms of the Goſpel. It is ſaid to be impoſſible to *renew them to Repentance:* not to be impoſſible for them to be pardoned and accepted, ſuppoſing them to come to true Repentance. But we are now ſpeaking of the Pardon of ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians, tho' never ſo notorious Sinners, as may, and do, come up to the Terms required: and this Paſſage, you ſee, cannot be meant of Sinners, during their Chriſtian Profeſſion; or of Sinners of any ſort, who do at any time come up to the *Terms* offered in the Goſpel. But then,

3. THE *Impoſſibility* here ſpoken of, is not a natural or abſolute Impoſſibility: but only a very great Difficulty; which, in the ordinary way of ſpeaking, is often ſaid to be impoſſible; and repreſented by Similitudes taken from natural Impoſſibilities. At this Day, we our ſelves often call a difficult Matter,

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Matter, an impoſſible thing; without meaning it in the ſtrict and accurate Senſe of the Word: and in the Eaſtern Nations, their Ways of ſpeaking were much more exorbitant, and their Figures of Speech more ſtrange, than thoſe amongſt us. *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots?* ſaith the *Prophet*, *Jer.* xiii. 23. *then ſhall ye alſo who are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well.* If one were here to follow the *Letter* of the Expreſſion, one would think that the *Prophet* was repreſenting it to be as impoſſible, in the nature of the thing, for the habitual Sinner to turn to the Practice of Virtue, as it is for the *Blackmoor* to alter the Colour of his Body. Whereas it is manifeſt that this could not be intended, becauſe it was the ſame Prophet's Buſineſs and Deſign, (as it was that of others alſo) to perſuade thoſe very Sinners, to whom He ſpeaks, to reform their Ways: which certainly was the abſurdeſt Thing imaginable, ſuppoſing it a Matter which He knew, and repreſented to them, to be abſolutely impoſſible.

THUS our Saviour himſelf repreſents the Difficulty of a Rich Man's embracing the Goſpel,

Goſpel, and arriving ſafe at the Place of future Rewards, (a Difficulty ariſing from the ſtrong Temptations there are in the Poſſeſſion of Riches, to Covetouſneſs, or Pride, or Luxury;) by a Similitude taken from a thing abſolutely impoſſible: and goeth ſo high, in the figurative way of ſpeaking, as to ſay, *It is eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* Matth. xix. 24. And yet his great Deſign was to call theſe rich Men themſelves to ſuch an Uſe of their Riches, as that they might prove the Occaſion of their greater Reward hereafter. Which ſhews that it was not his Intent, in thoſe Words, to ſpeak literally; or to ſignify any more than his Senſe of the very great Difficulty of rich Men's behaving themſelves ſo here, as to attain Eternal Happineſs hereafter. SERM. VIII.

FROM all this it appears that Things are, in Scripture, ſaid, or repreſented, to be impoſſible, by an uſual manner of ſpeaking, which are only extremely difficult: and conſequently, that the Word *impoſſible*, in the Paſſage now under Conſideration, (taking into the Account likewiſe the nature of the thing

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thing ſpoken of,) doth not ſignify any more; and that the *Apoſtle*'s Deſign in that *Paſſage* was no other than to ſignify the extreme Difficulty of the true Repentance of ſuch as do totally renounce the Chriſtian Faith, and publickly diſown their Maſter, Jeſus Chriſt, after they have received themſelves, and ſeen in others, the greateſt and moſt miraculous Proofs that He is the true *Meſſiah*.

AND thus we ſee that, whether we conſider the Perſons concerned in this Paſſage; or the thing affirmed of them in it; it hath no reference to the Sins of profeſſed Chriſtians, continuing ſuch; and doth not prove any thing of the Impoſſibility of their Repentance, and Acceptance.

3. THE *third* and laſt *Paſſage* of the *New Teſtament* which I ſhall mention, as quoted, and applied, by ſome, to the ſame purpoſe, is that which I read to you, at the Entrance of this Diſcourſe, out of the ſame *Epiſtle* to the *Hebrews*, ch. x. v. 26, 27. *For if we ſin wilfully after that we have received the Knowledge of the Truth, there remains no more Sacrifice for Sin, but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment, and fiery*

fiery Indignation, which ſhall devour the Adverſaries. Now, SERM. VIII.

1. To put ſuch an Interpretation upon this Paſſage, as to take away all Hopes of Pardon, from ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians as have been, in any degree, wilful Sinners, even ſuppoſing them to return and amend; is to contradict the main Deſign and Tenour of the Goſpel: as I have juſt now ſhewed. And whatever contradicts the main Deſign of the Goſpel, cannot poſſibly be the true meaning of any particular Paſſage in it: whether we be able to find out the exact meaning of the Paſſage, or not. The Form of Expreſſion, upon which the Suppoſition is founded, equally precludes from Mercy the ſincereſt repenting Chriſtian, who hath once wilfully tranſgreſſed God's Law, and the *vileſt* Sinner who is hardened in his Iniquities. So that, if it excludes any Sinner from Pardon; it excludes *all* who ever once ſinned. And who can put ſuch a Senſe upon this Paſſage, as will render vain the whole Chriſtian Diſpenſation; and debarr every one, who ever named the Name of Chriſt, from all Title to any Benefit from Him? This it is impoſſible to conceive, or embrace, as the Intent of the

SERM. VIII. the Apoſtle. And as for the true Intent of it,

2. IT will be obvious, I believe, to every one's Obſervation, upon the reading the whole Context, that this *ſinning wilfully*, in v. 26. is the total and open forſaking the Chriſtian Aſſemblies, in the Verſe before: which was accounted a renouncing and being aſhamed of, the Chriſtian Faith, in Compliance with the Infidel World about them. And that this *ſinning wilfully*, here ſpoken of, is to be underſtood of a publick Renunciation of Chriſtianity, and Apoſtacy from the Goſpel, ſeems plain from the 29th Verſe, in which the *wilful Sinner*, mentioned here, is oppoſed to one amongſt the *Jews that deſpiſed Moſes's Law*, and profeſſedly oppoſed it; and is farther deſcribed to be one who hath *troden under Foot the Son of God, and hath counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith He was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done Deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace:* Phraſes, very like to thoſe by which the *Author* of this *Epiſtle* deſcribes an open Apoſtacy from the Chriſtian Faith, in the *Paſſage* which I laſt conſidered; and which cannot agree ſo well to any other ſort

ſort of wilful Sins, as to that of a Depar- SERM.
ture from the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and, VIII.
as much as in Men lies, giving an open Affront to that Diſpenſation, and bringing a publick Diſgrace upon it. So that the *wilful Sinners*, here ſpoken of, are not the *wilful Sinners*, of whom we are now treating; *viz.* thoſe who are ſo, at any time, during their Profeſſion of Chriſtianity.

3. WHAT is affirmed of theſe Sinners, in the *Paſſage* now before us, is, that *there remaineth no more Sacrifice for Sin:* that is, either that the Force of *Chriſt*'s Sacrifice ſignifieth nothing to ſuch as have renounced his Religion: or that there is no other Sacrifice of any Force, beſides that which they have renounced; which cannot profit them, whilſt it is publickly renounced by them. But certainly this is ſaid of them, conſidered as continuing in their Apoſtacy; and not as returning ſincerely again to their former Profeſſion. And this indeed may be ſaid of any wilful habitual Sinners, continuing ſuch, that the Sacrifice of Chriſt will profit them nothing: but this, without taking from them the Hope of the Favour of God, upon the

SERM. VIII. Alteration of their Lives, and their coming up to his Terms.

IT appears therefore, I think, very plainly, that the Perſons here ſpoken of, are not *wilful Sinners*, who are ſuch, during their open Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*; and that, ſuppoſing the thing here affirmed, to be affirmed of all *wilful Sinners* in general, it is not an utter Excluſion of any of them from all Hopes, but as remaining in their Sins: and conſequently, that this *Paſſage* proves nothing againſt the Poſſibility of *wilful Sinners*, of all Degrees, amongſt ſuch as profeſs Chriſtianity, obtaining the Favour of God, upon the Terms appointed by Himſelf in the Goſpel: *viz.* the forſaking what is evil; and the ſincere, univerſal Amendment of their Lives, in all thoſe Inſtances, in which they can diſcover themſelves to have been formerly ſinful, or defective.

AND it being ſo evident, from what I have heretofore diſcourſed, that theſe are the only Conditions of their final Juſtification, and Acceptance; and ſo plain from what I have now ſaid, that, upon their coming up to theſe Conditions, they need not doubt of that Juſtification and Acceptance; what remains,

mains, but that we all ſhake off every Pre- SERM. VIII.
tenſe of Deſpair and Deſpondency, on the one hand; and every vain Hope and fruitleſs Expectation, on the other; and heartily ſet our ſelves to amend whatever is amiſs in our Tempers, or Practice; to run our Chriſtian Race in that Path which *Chriſt* himſelf hath marked out to us; and, *by patient continuance in well-doing, to ſeek after Glory and Immortality?* Which God grant we may all obtain, for the Sake of his Son *Jeſus Chriſt*, our Lord!

The Miſtake of relying upon Faith, conſidered, &c.

SERMON IX.

EPHESIANS ii. 8.

For by Grace are you ſaved through Faith; and that not of your ſelves: it is the Gift of God.

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NOW come to the *Second part* of that *Deſign*, which I have, for ſome Time, had in View; *viz.* to examine particularly the principal of thoſe falſe Pretenſes, and miſtaken Notions, concerning the *Terms* of our Acceptance with God, by which Men ſupport themſelves in their Continuance in their beloved Vices; and endeavour to elude the Force, and arm themſelves againſt the Power, of thoſe plain Texts of *Scripture*, and thoſe convincing Arguments, by

by which I have already proved that the Method laid down in the Chriſtian Religion, by which Sinners may hope to be reconciled to *God*, thro' Jeſus Chriſt, is the actual Amendment of their Lives and Tempers in all ſuch Inſtances as they know to be contrary, in any reſpect, to the Law of God; and that this is indiſpenſably required of them in order to their final Juſtification at the great Day of the Lord. SERM. IX.

THE *firſt* of theſe Miſtakes which I ſhall take notice of, and examine, is the Miſtake of thoſe Men who appear to be induced, by ſome Texts of the *New Teſtament*, to rely upon *Faith*, or their believing in *Jeſus Chriſt*, and confident Application of his Merits to themſelves; and to expect Salvation from this, conſidered as diſtinct, and ſeparate, from Obedience to the Moral Laws of the *Goſpel*. And amongſt the reſt, the Text which I have now read to you, hath been often heretofore, and is very likely to be often again, alledged to this Purpoſe, by Men who are thus diſpoſed to lay hold on any thing rather than heartily to ſet about the uneaſy Task of reforming what is amiſs

SERM. IX. in themſelves. In the Examination of this great and fatal Miſtake, I deſign

I. To lay before you the plain meaning of St. *Paul* in the Text.

II. To ſhew that no ſuch Pretenſe as this can fairly be built upon theſe, or any the like Words, in the *New Teſtament*.

III. To obſerve that St. *Paul* doth, in this very Epiſtle, as well as in many other Places, ſufficiently declare againſt any ſuch Pretenſe: as our *bleſſed Lord* did likewiſe before Him in the plaineſt Words.

IV. To ſhew you in what Senſe *Faith*, or believing the *Goſpel*, is ſaid to ſave us.

I. IT will be very proper to lay before you the plain meaning of St. *Paul* in the *Text*.

AND, if you look into the *Chapter*, you will find that He is there ſpeaking of the former Condition in which the *Epheſians* were, before their Converſion from a State of Heatheniſm, to the Belief of the Goſpel; and magnifying God's Mercy, and the exceeding Riches of his Grace, or Favour, towards them, from the *firſt* Verſe to the *eighth*: in which He therefore goes on to make them ſenſible of their Obligation to that God who had

had thus *quicken'd* them *who were dead in ſins. For by Grace are ye ſaved:* that is, *For it is very fit you ſhould know and conſider that it is by the mere Grace or Favour*, or Mercy of God (as the Word ſignifies) *that ye are ſaved through Faith*; that ye are put into a Method, and State of Safety and Salvation, by means of your receiving the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. It is his own Act, his mere Mercy, that you have Terms of Acceptance offered you, upon your believing in Chriſt. The being ſaved in this Method is by the Grace or Mercy of God, I ſay; *not of your ſelves*, that is, no Contrivance, or Appointment of your own; not owing to your ſelves: but it is the Gift, the free Contrivance, and Offer of God to you, that you ſhould be put into this happy State by the Goſpel. This is the meaning of the Expreſſion, *and that not of your ſelves*; not, as it may ſound in our Tranſlation, *and that Faith*, or *believing*, *not of your ſelves*, but entirely *the Gift of God*; (for the Word *that* in the *Greek* is of the Neuter Gender, and ſo cannot ſo eaſily be ſuppoſed to relate to the Word *Faith* going before:) but, *that*, or *this* whole Matter, *this* your

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SERM. IX. being *ſaved by Faith*; this being called into a State of Salvation by the Goſpel, is *not of your ſelves*; but the Gift, the Favour, the Offer of God, previous to all Deſign, and Thought of your own. Then follow theſe Words, *v.* 9. *Not of Works, leſt any Man ſhould boaſt*, i. e. And as the Propoſal of this gracious Method of Salvation was not owing to your ſelves, and your Contrivance: ſo neither was ſuch a Favour merited at the Hands of God by any paſt Perfection, by any good Behaviour of your own, preceding it. For, as I told you already, *v.* 1. and 5. *you were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, when you were called to the Knowledge of this merciful Diſpenſation. And this I add, leſt any of you ſhould boaſt, as if you had deſerved of the Hands of Almighty God, by your paſt good Behaviour, ſo merciful a Diſpenſation, ſo gracious a Propoſal, as is made to you in the Goſpel. Then He goes on to aſſure them farther that their happy Condition is owing entirely to God, who had, without any Contrivance or Deſert of theirs, ordered Affairs ſo by his good Providence, that they were now Believers in *Jeſus Chriſt*; and had

had the Offers of Salvation, upon the Terms of the Goſpel, brought home to them. SERM. IX.

THIS, therefore, is the manifeſt Deſign of the Apoſtle in the Text, to raiſe the Gratitude of the *Epheſians* to *Almighty God*; and to inſpire them with all poſſible Regard to Him; by putting them in mind that they were formerly in an helpleſs and miſerable Condition, *dead in Sins*, void of the true Life of reaſonable Creatures; that they had no Thought themſelves of ſuch Salvation as had been offered them by the Chriſtian Religion; that they had no Merit to engage God Almighty to make them ſuch an Offer, and preach ſuch a State of Reconciliation and Salvation to them; that it was of his *Grace*, or Favour, that they were *ſaved* from their former evil Condition of Sin and Ignorance, by believing and receiving the Goſpel: for which they were obliged therefore to magnify the exceeding Riches of God's Mercy towards them in Chriſt; and not to attribute this Happineſs to themſelves, who were before this void of every thing that could be pleaſing to Almighty God, or influence him to ſhew them ſo great and remarkable a Kindneſs. It is by *Grace* that ye are delivered

SERM. IX. vered from your former miſerable Condition; it is an Act of Grace that *ye are ſaved thro' Faith*, or put into a State of Salvation by believing the Goſpel: and this being *ſaved* in this Method, and by means of this believing, is *not of your ſelves*; but wholly owing to the good Will of God, whoſe free Offer, and Gift it is. This being ſo manifeſtly the Intent of the Apoſtle in this Place; it appears from hence what I propoſed in the ſecond place, *viz.*

II. THAT no ſuch Pretenſe as that which makes *Faith* alone, ſeparated from a good Life and Converſation, the Condition on which we ſhall be accepted at laſt; that no ſuch Pretenſe as this, I ſay, can be built upon this Paſſage of the *New Teſtament*: which will lead us likewiſe to the farther Conſideration of this Miſtake; and to give a true Account of what St. *James*, and St. *Paul*, upon other Occaſions, have affirmed upon this Subject.

AS for the Paſſage now before us; we have ſeen already that by our being ſaved by, or thro' Faith, is meant our being put into the true Way of Salvation by believing in Jeſus Chriſt: and therefore that it cannot be laid

laid upon any ſuch Expreſſion as this, that it is this Faith or believing taken by it ſelf, and conſidered without any Influence upon our Lives, that will at laſt be accepted by God; if we had Opportunity of practiſing Righteouſneſs, and have refuſed to do it. Beſides, every thing neceſſary to Salvation muſt be repreſented as the Method that leads to it: and becauſe Faith in Chriſt, believing in Him, and receiving Him for our Maſter, is one and the firſt Requiſite; therefore we may be ſaid to be ſaved by *Faith*, without any ſuch meaning as that other Things may not be as neceſſary, and as indiſpenſable, as that. SERM. IX.

BUT here it may be ſaid, Doth not St. *Paul* expreſly in another place attribute Juſtification to *Faith* without the Works of the Law? *Gal.* iii. 6, 11. To which I anſwer, Doth not St. *James* in his *Epiſtle*, ch. ii. 14. expreſly combat that Opinion which ſome Men may falſly build upon this, *viz.* that *Faith*, without Moral Works conſequent upon it, is ſufficient to Salvation? And is not St. *James*'s Epiſtle of Authority with Chriſtians, as well as St. *Paul*'s? And is not this a Demonſtration to all who acknowledge

SERM. IX. ledge this, that St. *Paul* could not intend any ſuch thing as ſome have fathered upon Him? But this is not all that is to be ſaid. For it is manifeſt that St. *Paul* is there ſpeaking of ſuch Works of the Law, as Circumciſion; and arguing, that ſuch are not neceſſary, from *Abraham*'s being juſtified by the eminent Faith which He had before Circumciſion: and this againſt ſome Perſons who would ſtill pretend that the Obſervation of ſuch Things was neceſſary to the Favour of God. Add to this, that St. *Paul* uſes the Word Faith for the Goſpel-Diſpenſation preached by Jeſus Chriſt; and is only arguing that That is ſufficient without the Obſervation of the Moſaical Ceremonies. But He is never arguing with deſign to make Men believe that a mere empty Faith, void of good Works, the Works of Righteouſneſs, can ſave any Man at laſt: but ſaith much to the contrary in all his Epiſtles. But with reſpect to what is ſaid both by *Him* and St. *James*, concerning the Faith and Juſtification of *Abraham* and of *Chriſtians*; it may be proper to obſerve as follows.

1. ST. *Paul* ſaith that *Abraham* was juſtified without, and before, ſuch Works as *Circum-*

Circumciſion. St. *James* ſaith that *Abraham* was not juſtified by an empty Faith without Works of Obedience; and would never have been accepted of God, unleſs He had ſhewn the reality of his Faith by Obedience to the Call and Command of God. Here is no Contradiction between them. So likewiſe *Chriſtians* will be juſtified by means of believing the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, without any ſuch Works as Circumciſion, or any other Works of the Ceremonial Law; as St. *Paul* argued: But they will never be juſtified, and finally acquitted by any Belief in Chriſt, without bringing forth, as they have Opportunity, ſuch good Fruits, and walking in ſuch good Works, as the Goſpel of Chriſt directs, and commands them to practice; as St. *James* ſaith. Again, SERM. IX.

2. *ABRAHAM* was, for one ſignal Act of Faith and Truſt in God, called by Him *righteous*; taken for ſuch, and reputed as a Perſon free from the Guilt of his paſt Sins: as ſaith St. *Paul.* But it is manifeſt, ſaith St. *James*, that this *Faith* of *Abraham* was not ſuch an empty Faith as ſome Chriſtians pretend to rely upon: nay, that He would not have been juſtified finally by God,

SERM. IX. God, unleſs He had, when He was tried by God, ſhewn by the Obedience of his Life, that his Faith was real, and ſincere. Neither in this is there any Contradiction between them. So likewiſe it is true that a Chriſtian, upon his firſt believing the Goſpel, and receiving Jeſus Chriſt as the Meſſiah and Saviour of the World, is acquitted from the Guilt of his paſt Sins; and reputed at this time, and for the ſake of this *Faith*, as a juſt and righteous Perſon, clear from all paſt Guilt: as St. *Paul* always taught the firſt *Chriſtians*, who were converted at ripe Years from a Life of Infidelity and Sin. And ſo likewiſe it is true that no Chriſtian who hath Opportunity, after his Converſion, to practiſe Holineſs, and yet continues unfruitful, or wicked; that no ſuch Chriſtian, I ſay, ſhall be finally juſtified and acquitted, at the laſt Day, for the ſake of his believing in Chriſt; as St. *James* teacheth: but that the final Juſtification of ſuch Chriſtians depends upon their ſhewing their Faith by their Works, as St. *James* expreſſeth it; and upon their bringing forth good Fruit in their Lives and Converſations.

THUS

THUS may it eaſily be ſeen that theſe *Two Apoſtles* perfectly agree cencerning the Neceſſity of a good Life, and of every Branch of the Law of Virtue. But St. *Paul* had to deal with a ſort of Jewiſh Chriſtians, who retained an Affection for the Works of the Law, and Circumciſion particularly: and therefore found occaſion to tell them that their Father *Abraham* himſelf was juſtified without ſuch Works; that his eminent Faith was one time counted to him for Righteouſneſs, or Juſtification; that for the ſake of that Faith He was eſteemed by God free from all the Guilt He had contracted by Sin before that Time; and that therefore it was nothing but what was agreeable to that great Example which they pretended to love and honour, that God ſhould accept ſuch as believed in his Son Jeſus Chriſt, without their adhering to ſuch Works as Circumciſion; and for the ſake of that Faith; in Reward, and for Encouragement, of it; ſhould acquit them from the Guilt of all their Sins committed before that Time. But St. *James* found that ſome miſunderſtood and perverted ſuch Doctrine as this; and that ſome Chriſtians began to pretend that no Works at all, SERM. IX.

not

SERM. IX. not thoſe of Piety, and Charity, were neceſſary to their Juſtification at the great Day; and that their believing in Chriſt would acquit them from the Guilt of all their Sins that they ſhould commit after this Belief, and during the Time of their Chriſtian Profeſſion. And therefore He found it neceſſary to tell them that *Abraham* ſhewed his Obedience to God's Will in the higheſt Inſtances, and truſted not in an empty *Faith*; but, tho' He had been once acquitted from paſt Sins by an eminent Degree of it, yet that he did not expect to continue in Favour with God, unleſs by obeying all his Commands, and ſhewing himſelf ready to fulfil his whole Will; and ſo likewiſe that *Chriſtians* cannot expect to continue in the Favour of God, or that State of Juſtification and Acceptance which their firſt believing put them into, without imitating *Abraham*'s Obedience, and following his Steps in good Works, as well as in Faith; or rather, that there can be no ſuch thing as true Faith without good Works, any more than there can be a good Tree without good Fruit.

THESE were the different Reaſons for the different, tho' not contradictory, *Poſitions*

tions of theſe Two *Apoſtles*; and for their different manner of handling this Point. And in this Matter great Account is to be had of the following Diſtinction; that believing in Jeſus Chriſt acquits from the Guilt of Sins committed before ſuch Belief; and this merely in order to a better Life for the future; which was St. *Paul*'s frequent Affirmation: but that believing in Jeſus Chriſt doth not acquit from the Guilt of any Sins continued in, after this Belief, and during our Chriſtian Profeſſion, but indeed add to it extremely, as St. *James* in effect affirms; and as St. *Paul* often taught. Which will appear more plainly from what will be ſaid under the Third Propoſition, *viz.*

3. THAT St. *Paul* doth, in this very Epiſtle, as well as in many other places, ſufficiently declare againſt any ſuch Pretenſe as that which I have been now examining: and this, in Imitation of his great Maſter who did the ſame before him. Our Lord, you cannot but remember, ſet himſelf againſt this very Deceit, by which He foreſaw that many of his profeſſed Diſciples would endeavour to elude the great Deſign of his coming into the World. The Words you have often had

SERM. IX. in your Ears, *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but He that doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven:* a Declaration which, in other Words, expreſſeth this very thing, that it is not believing in Him, or acknowledging him for our Maſter, or applying his Comforts to our ſelves, that ſhall avail us at laſt; but the *doing the Will of his Father*; or a conſtant univerſal Obedience to the Commands laid upon us in his Goſpel. This I repeat to you, under this Head, becauſe it is ſo expreſs a Declaration againſt Men's relying on *Faith* only for Salvation, or final Juſtification; that a more expreſs one could not have been made in Words.

AFTER having remarked this, I come to ſhew that St. *Paul* himſelf guards againſt the ſame fatal Miſtake in this very Epiſtle, in which He declares that *We are ſaved through Faith.* He doth indeed profeſs to the *Epheſians, ch.* i. *v.* 9. that their being in ſo happy a State came not *of their Works:* but that is meant of their Works before their Converſion; that they had no Merit to invite or induce Almighty God to offer them ſuch

ſuch Salvation. But in the very next Words, *v.* 10. He declares that we Chriſtians are *God's Workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good Works*; that we are, by Converſion to Chriſtianity, as it were a-new created by the Will of God, calling us to it; and created for this End, that we may perform good Works. So that you ſee He immediately guards againſt any ſuch Notion, as they might weakly entertain, of his attributing our final Salvation to Faith ſeparated from goods Works, in the Goſpel-Senſe of good Works. And indeed, tho' in ſome Places St. *Paul* doth vilify the Merits of the World and their Behaviour, before the coming of the Goſpel; and tho' in others He vilifies the Works of the *Law* of *Moſes*, with which ſome would have burthened the Evangelical Profeſſion: yet no one can ſhew any one Text, or any one ſingle Paſſage, in which He vilifies, and ſets at nought, the Works of Evangelical Righteouſneſs, or Obedience to the Moral Laws of Virtue. SERM. IX.

To vilify and decry the Behaviour and Works both of *Jew* and *Gentile*, before the Faith of Chriſt prevailed, was not to ſet at nought *good Works*, but bad ones; and only

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to obſerve the corrupt and ſad Eſtate of Mankind. To vilify the *Ceremonial Law*, after the coming in of Juſtification by *Faith* (or the *Goſpel*) was not to vilify ſuch Works as we are ſpeaking of: but indeed to take Men's Minds off from Shadows, and Ceremonies; and to fix them upon good Works that are more ſubſtantial. Nay, when He ever toucheth upon the Moral Duties; with how much Vehemence doth He recommend them? When He ſpeaks of the *Epheſians*, or other Chriſtians, having improved in Virtue, ſince their Converſion to Chriſtianity; what Commendations doth He give them? And with how much Joy doth He offer up his Thanks to God for it? But we never find him depreſſing that ſort of Works; or ſetting up *Faith* againſt them; or taking off the bent of Men's minds from them: but preſſing them into the love and practice of them with all the Earneſtneſs poſſible. And then, if He mentions the Sins of any profeſſed Chriſtians; doth He do it, as if He thought their Faith would avail them? Or rather, doth He not do it with ſuch a Spirit and Zeal againſt them, as if no Words were bad enough for them? And yet they had an eaſy Reply

to

to make to Him, had He taught them any ſuch Doctrine, as that a ſtrong Faith would ſave them at laſt, tho' ſeparate from good Works. SERM. IX.

BUT particularly, in this Epiſtle, how many Moral Duties and good Works doth He preſs upon the *Epheſians?* And how ſolemnly doth He aſſure them, *ch.* v. 5, 6, that the Immoralities there mentioned will exclude all, who are guilty of them, from Heaven? And adds, *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words: for becauſe of theſe Things the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Diſobedience.* He puts them in mind, *v.* 8. that they *were ſometimes Darkneſs; but now Light in the Lord: walk as Children of the Light. For the Fruit of the Spirit is in all Goodneſs, and Righteouſneſs, and Truth,* v. 9. and ſo on. Doth all this, and an hundred times more of the ſame ſort, that might be urged from his Writings; Doth all this look like the Doctrine of a Man who taught them that *Faith*, without Goodneſs and Virtue, would ſave them at laſt? Or rather, Is not all this plainly inconſiſtent with that Suppoſition? And doth it not all ſhew that it is impoſſible He ſhould

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intend to teach any ſuch Doctrine; however his Words may ſound at firſt hearing?

I MENTION not here, what I have often mentioned upon the like Occaſion, that it is contradictory to the declared Deſign of the Chriſtian Religion to ſuppoſe any ſuch thing as this. For if the mere believing in Chriſt ſhall ſave us at laſt; tho' during that Belief we have wilfully perſiſted in Diſobedience to his Commands: then is it not true that He came to *call Sinners to Repentance*; then is it not true that the *Grace of God hath appeared to Men in the Goſpel, teaching us to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this preſent World*; then is it not true that our Lord expects us to bring forth Fruit; or to be prepared for his coming by good Works; or that He will judge us according to what we have done, whether it be good or evil. But on the contrary, theſe Things are true; and moſt expreſly, and poſitively aſſerted in the New Teſtament: and conſequently it cannot be true that Faith, without good Works, will ſave us at laſt: nor can any thing be true, that takes away the abſolute

abſolute Neceſſity of an holy, and virtuous Converſation. SERM. IX.

BUT now, after I have thus guarded againſt that bad and pernicious Senſe in which any Chriſtians may underſtand ſome Expreſſions of Holy Scripture concerning our being *ſaved by*, or through, *Faith*; it is time,

4. To conſider a little in what Senſe it is that Chriſtians may be ſaid *to be ſaved by Faith*, or by believing in Jeſus Chriſt. And

1. THIS may be well ſaid of Them, becauſe it is their Faith, or believing, which ſaves them from the Guilt of all their Sins committed before this Faith: a Privilege which peculiarly belonged to the firſt Chriſtians converted, at Years of Diſcretion, from a Life of Sin and Impurity. And therefore, this firſt Juſtification is often ſpoken of by St. *Paul* in his Epiſtles, and attributed to Faith. But this doth not concern thoſe who have been educated, and inſtructed, in the Knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion. The guilty Sinner in thoſe Days knew not whither to fly from the Guilt of his Sins, till his Belief entitled him to this Favour; which God had annexed to it, and the Apoſtles always promiſed in his name.

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2. WE may be well ſaid to be *ſaved through Faith*, becauſe it is by believing in Jeſus Chriſt, that we come to know and embrace thoſe Terms which are offered by God for our Salvation and Happineſs. He came to ſave us; and by cloſing in with his Propoſals we muſt be ſaved: and this we cannot do, without believing Him to be ſent of God, and receiving him as ſuch. This, therefore, being abſolutely neceſſary; we may well find Salvation attributed to this, which is the firſt moving Principle towards it; and without which we ſhould not go one Step forward in that Way to Salvation which He came to point out to us. *He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life*; and without knowing him, and believing in him, how ſhould we know the Way, or the Path, to that Eternal Life which He came to unfold to us; who otherwiſe might have wandered, every one after the peculiar Imagination, or Inclination, or Humour, of our own Hearts? As Salvation therefore, comes in the Method propoſed by Chriſt: ſo may it well be attributed to believing in Him; becauſe that alone can put us into the Method propoſed by Him.

3. CHRI-

3. CHRISTIANS are *ſaved by Faith*, becauſe it is the Foundation of their Obedience, and of all their good Actions. It is the *Tree* which bears good Fruit; without which good Fruit there could be no Salvation: and conſequently, what is ſo neceſſary, and ſo uſeful, to the Production of good Works, is it ſelf entitled to thoſe Rewards, and happy Conſequences, which follow good Works. This is what St. *James* ſeems to think, that the only way of proving that we have Faith, is by our good Actions, *Ch.* ii. 15. Will any one, ſaith He, believe that you wiſh them well, or that you are willing to relieve them, if, when you ſee their Diſtreſs, you only tell them ſo; and at the ſame time deny them what you can afford them towards their Relief? From hence He argues, As there is no true Sign of this charitable Diſpoſition, but the Fruit of Beneficence which it produceth; and as one who is always hard-hearted hath no Pretenſe to it: ſo, is there no Proof of a real Faith, but the Works it produceth; of which Works therefore, a ſincere Faith is never deſtitute. Thus will even *He* allow that *Faith may*

ſave

SERM. IX. *ſave us*, by influencing our Actions; but no otherwiſe.

LET any one likewiſe turn to the xi*th chap.* to the *Hebrews*; there indeed he will find an Account of the Excellencies and Advantages of Faith; of its Acceptableneſs to God, and its Efficacy towards our own Happineſs: but He will find that the Argument muſt be reſolved into this at laſt, that *without Faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God*, becauſe without Faith it is impoſſible to live a Life of Virtue, or to do ſuch Actions as are there recorded; and that by *Faith* is meant a vital active Principle, moving us to behave our ſelves agreeably to our Faith. And therefore, with reſpect to Chriſtians, *Faith* muſt be an active Principle, influencing and ſtrongly moving them to ſuch a Behaviour, and Conduct; ſuch a Life and Converſation, as their believing in ſuch a Maſter naturally directs to. If we believe in *God* truly; we cannot but love and honour him above all things. If we believe in *Chriſt* ſincerely; we cannot but endeavour to obey his Commands; obſerve his Precepts; and follow his Example. And thus ſhall we be *ſaved thro' Faith* or believing in Him; becauſe this Faith, if it

it be ſincere, will be the Foundation of ſuch an univerſal Obedience as He requires of us. SERM. IX.

IN theſe Senſes therefore, and on theſe Accounts, great Things might well be ſaid of Faith in the New Teſtament; and Salvation attributed to it. But the great Point, in which we are concerned, is, not to be deceived in a Matter of ſuch Importance; and to that End, not to interpret any one Expreſſion of the *New Teſtament* ſo as to contradict the plaineſt and moſt repeated Declarations of it. Let the Concluſion of the preſent Subject, therefore, be to this effect. *Faith* is an Act of the Mind moſt acceptable to God. Faith in his Son ſaves us, as it puts us into the ſecure Way to Salvation, if we be ſincere; and as it is the Foundation of all our Chriſtian Practice, and of all our beſt and moſt Godlike Behaviour. This *Faith* alone, that is, the Method propoſed in the Goſpel, without the Works of the Ceremonial Law of *Moſes*, is ſufficient to ſecure to us our future Happineſs: But *Faith* alone, that is, a Belief in Chriſt, without Obedience to his Laws; an empty, unfruitful Faith, accompanied with an ungodly Life, will condemn us at laſt. We are ſaved thro' Faith;

or

SERM. IX. or by believing in Chriſt; no otherwiſe than by being influenced by it: for Faith is required in order to Practice. *Faith* is indiſpenſably neceſſary in order to Salvation: and ſo likewiſe is a good Life indiſpenſably neceſſary in order to Salvation. Or, in other Words, a *Faith* working by Love, and manifeſting it ſelf by good Works, is that alone which will be of any Account to us, at laſt. *For as the Body without the Spirit is dead; ſo Faith without Works is dead alſo.* Now to God, *&c.*

The Miſtake, of relying upon external Performances, conſidered.

SERMON X.

ROMANS X. 13.

For whoſoever ſhall call upon the Name of the Lord ſhall be ſaved.

HAVE frequently obſerved to you that when Men are reſolved to retain their Sins, and go on in their evil Practices; and yet not to caſt away all Hopes of future Happineſs; they are ready to lay hold on any obſcure, or miſtaken, Text of the New Teſtament; and to draw it to their own Purpoſe, without conſidering the Purpoſe of the Writer, or laying the whole Tenour of the Goſpel together. One of this ſort of Paſſages, relating to Faith, I conſidered in my laſt Diſcourſe; and endeavoured to ſhew that

SERM. X. that no Encouragement could be deſigned in it for any to rely on a bare Belief of the Goſpel, without the bringing forth thoſe good Fruits, and practiſing thoſe Moral Duties, which the Goſpel it ſelf recommends.

ANOTHER of the like ſort, is That which I have now read to you; which ſome Men of weak Underſtandings, or ſtrong Paſſions, may be apt to ſeparate from the reſt of this *Epiſtle*, and conſider it ſo much by it ſelf, as to imagine that it was the Apoſtle's Deſign in it to make the *Calling upon the Name of God*, or of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the whole of the Goſpel-Covenant; and to affix Salvation to the mere outward joining in the public Acts of Chriſtian Profeſſion, and Worſhip. This is a very great Error: and muſt prove at laſt a very fatal Miſtake. And tho' it be indeed ſuch a Miſtake as one would think no one who conſiders the Nature of God, or all his Declarations in the Goſpel, could permit himſelf to be guilty of; yet we find by Experience that many profeſſed Chriſtians do at leaſt ſeek for Eaſe this way; and find as much as any ſuch poor Pretenſe can give to the Conſcience of ſuch a Creature as Man is.

IT

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IT cannot therefore be accounted unneceſſary or improper, to conſider the Caſe of ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians as allow themſelves in the Commiſſion of known Sins: and yet receive Comfort, and entertain Hopes of future Happineſs, from their devout, and repeated Performance of ſome outward Acts of Chriſtian Profeſſion, and Worſhip. They know that they continue in the Practice of Sin. But becauſe they feel a Warmth of what they imagine to be Devotion in the Worſhip of God; becauſe they frequent the public Prayers, or Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; becauſe they hear his Word with ſome Attention and Zeal; upon ſuch Accounts as theſe, they hope for his Favour at laſt, and perceive ſome Satisfaction and Reſt in that Hope for the preſent: imagining perhaps that St. *Paul* is on their ſide, and hath given it as his Judgment, that whoſoever ſhould *call upon the Name of the Lord*, as they do, ſhould be *ſaved*.

ONLY, before I come to ſpeak particularly to the Caſe of ſuch Chriſtians, I muſt give you a true Account of St. *Paul*'s Deſign in this part of this Epiſtle; which will at the ſame time lead you to the true meaning of

SERM. X. of the Words of the Text: *viz.* that He is here diſputing againſt Two Errors of the *Jews*. The one is, their ſeeking Juſtification by the Law of *Moſes*; and rejecting the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt, and the Goſpel preached to them as the only Method of Juſtification: and the other is, their imagining that the Meſſiah, whom they had been taught to expect, was to be of Benefit only to themſelves; and that the *Gentiles* were to have no part in his Bleſſings. Theſe two Errors, you may ſee, gave St. *Paul* no occaſion of ſpeaking particularly in this place of the Neceſſity which profeſſed Chriſtians lay under, to practice all Virtue; or, any otherwiſe than in general Terms, of the Chriſtian Faith, in Oppoſition to theſe Miſtakes. It was enough for his Purpoſe, to put them in mind that, according to the Law it ſelf, they muſt ſeek for Juſtification in another Method, diſtinct from that of the Works of the Law of *Moſes*; that this Juſtification had been declared by their own Prophets to be of ſuch a nature, as that it muſt be effected by means of Faith; and that the ſame Prophets had enlarged the Bounds of the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, and had promiſed this Bleſſing to all

all true Believers whereſoever diſperſed thro' the World. SERM. X.

THE firſt of theſe He doth, *v.* 4. *For Chriſt is the End of the Law*; that is, the Law it ſelf leads to Juſtification by the Goſpel: becauſe, as it follows, *v.* 5. *Moſes* himſelf propoſeth Juſtification by the Law upon no other Terms, but that of a perfect fulfilling the whole Law in every Tittle. Now, none of you can pretend to this: and therefore you ought to be willingly led to ſeek for Juſtification, or Acquittance from your paſt Sins and Failings, by believing and embracing the Goſpel.

AS to the ſecond; He puts them in mind, *v.* 11. that *Iſaiah* himſelf, one of their own Prophets, ſpeaking of the *Meſſiah*, had declared long ago that the true Method of obtaining the Aſſurance of God's Favour was by believing in Him, when He ſhould appear; and by entring into his Religion. And then He argues, from the Latitude of this Declaration, that *whoſoever*, whether *Jew* or *Greek*, takes this Method, *ſhall be ſaved*; alledging another of their Prophets, who had likewiſe, in ſpeaking of the Kingdom of the Meſſiah, declared that *whoſoever*, without any Ex-

SERM. X. ception of *Gentile* more than *Jew*, *ſhall call upon the Name of the Lord*, that is, truly receive his Religion, let him be of what Nation or Family ſoever, *ſhall be ſaved*; ſhall be ſaved by this from the Guilt of his paſt Sins; and, if He be ſincere in this Profeſſion, will infallibly be put hereby into a State of Salvation, and obtain it moſt certainly at the great Day of Accounts.

IT very plainly, therefore, appears that St. *Paul*'s Deſign was not to fix the Terms of final Salvation; or to tell Chriſtians exactly what was required of them: but, in general, to tell the *Jews* that it was the Voice of their Law, and their Prophets, that Juſtification could not be by their Law; and that the true Method in which they muſt come to be acquitted from the Guilt of their paſt Sins, and made happy at laſt, is the believing in Jeſus Chriſt, and ſeeking this Happineſs in the Ways propoſed in the Goſpel; and that in this Method the *Gentiles* had as real a Right to God's Mercy, as themſelves.

HAVING thus given you a View of the *Apoſtle*'s Deſign in this part of his *Epiſtle* to the *Romans*; I ſhall now conſider the Pretenſe of ſuch as are led by this, or any other like

like Paſſage in the New Teſtament, or by any falſe Motive, to place their Confidence in the external Parts of Religion, whilſt they manifeſtly refuſe to permit it to have any vital Influence upon their Minds; and openly allow themſelves in an habitual Courſe of Sin. And, SERM. X.

1. FROM what hath been ſaid already, it cannot but appear abſurd to take a general Expreſſion of St. *Paul*'s, uſed upon quite another Occaſion; and to apply it to what was not then in his Thoughts, or in his Deſign. He doth ſay, indeed, that the true Way to Salvation is the believing in Jeſus Chriſt; and the external Profeſſion of that Belief: in Oppoſition to ſuch as ſought for Juſtification by *Moſes*'s Law. But it is very unfair to argue from hence, that therefore *whoſoever* doth *call upon the Name of the Lord Jeſus*, tho' He live in conſtant Rebellion to his Laws, ſhall at laſt be made happy by Him; and that nothing but this external Act of Religion is required of Chriſtians. So that St. *Paul*'s manifeſt Deſign forbids us to apply his Words to what was not at all his Intent in this place.

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2. IF the plain Drift of his Argument did not ſuppoſe this; yet it would be the higheſt Abſurdity to deduce any ſuch Conſequence from his general Declaration of God's Favour to ſuch as ſhould come in to the Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Religion. For ſuppoſe a Perſon ſhould be commiſſioned to aſſure a Company of Rebels, that whoſoever of them ſhould reſign themſelves up to the Mercy of their rightful Prince; and own him publickly; and call upon his Name in their Petitions, and Submiſſions; ſhould be ſaved from Puniſhment: would it not be the moſt unfair and abſurd Concluſion, if they ſhould argue from hence, that the Prince required nothing from them but this external Act of Submiſſion; and that this would be for ever ſufficient to ſecure his Favour; tho' they ſhould after this reaſſume their former Behaviour; openly violate his juſt Commands; and affront his Government? Who would not join in condemning ſuch an hypocritical Submiſſion as this? And who would not think it juſt, that their Puniſhment ſhould be doubled upon them, even for the ſake of this pretended Submiſſion? And yet, Are the Dealings of many Men with

with God Almighty's Declarations, in the leaſt degree, better, or more juſtifiable? He ſends his Son to entreat thoſe who are Rebels againſt Him, to be reconciled to Him: and He declareth by Him that whoſoever comes in to Him, and believes, and calls upon him, ſhall be in a ſafe Condition, and kindly received by Him. And they argue from hence, that this external Act of Submiſſion, or Homage, is enough; and that they may ſafely rebel againſt Him for the future; ſo they do but in Words acknowledge Him. Whereas the Submiſſion required, is a ſincere, and hearty Submiſſion: which it cannot be, if it be accompanied with Diſhonour, Diſreſpect, and Diſobedience, in Actions. In this Caſe, Men ſhould be convinced by their own Maxims, and Principles. For if they abhor the Man who pretends Friendſhip, or Submiſſion, whilſt he neglects all Opportunities of doing them Service; or perhaps employs his Time in affronting and injuring them: how can they poſſibly imagine that any ſuch general Declaration of God's Favour to ſuch as *call upon his Name*, or perform any outward Acts of Religion, was intended to make Men

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SERM. X. easy under a Courſe of Sin; or to be applied to any Performances but what proceeded from a ſincere and upright Mind, full of a true Senſe of Religion, and bringing forth ſuch Fruits as Sincerity cannot be void of? So that were this Declaration in the Text ſeparated from the Deſign of the Apoſtle; and taken entirely by it ſelf: it is contrary to all the Maxims, and all the Rules of proceeding amongſt Men, to interpret it ſo, as to take Courage from it to affront Almighty God by the Diſobedience of our Lives; and to hope in his Mercy merely on Account of ſome external Performances of religious Worſhip. But, to proceed to other Conſiderations,

3. THIS *Pretenſe*, which I am now examining, doth really debaſe the Value of Virtue, in the Eyes of God, under the *Goſpel-Diſpenſation*, below what it was under the Influence of the Ceremonial Law it ſelf. When that Law was in force, one would have thought, that Men might then, if ever, have truſted to make themſelves acceptable to God by the Externals of Religion; by *Rivers of Oil, and Thouſands of Rams*: yet we find even then, the Queſtion asked, *What doth*

doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly; and to love Mercy; and to walk humbly with thy God? The Moral Virtues were the Things, even then, inſiſted on, when the Aſſiſtances, and Motives to them were not ſo great, or not ſo apparent: and when the Minds of the *Jews* could not but be more amuſed, and diverted from them, by their numerous and coſtly Services. And can any one believe that, under the Goſpel, in which God hath declared a Day of Judgment to come, and pronounced his Wrath more openly, than ever, againſt Sin; and in which He hath promulgated the greateſt Motives, and moſt powerful Aſſiſtances; that, under this Goſpel, I ſay, God ſhould put ſuch a Value upon the external Performances of Religion, as to make inſignificant the more *weighty Matters* of it? That He, who ſaid under the Law, *What doth the Lord require of thee*, but to practiſe the Moral Duties? ſhould, under the Goſpel, ſay, *What doth the Lord require of thee*, but to *call upon his Name*, or to hear his Word? That He, who laid ſuch Streſs upon Holineſs, and Virtue, even when He had conſulted Pomp and Ceremony in the *Jewiſh* Religion, ſhould

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SERM. X. now in effect diſengage Men from all ſtrict Obligation to that Holineſs and Virtue; and turn all their Thoughts upon external Acts of Devotion, and Religion, when He hath called the World to a Spiritual Religion, void of all that unneceſſary Pomp, and Ceremony? Who can believe this? Or who can fix ſo great an Abſurdity upon the Chriſtian Religion? And if we cannot in Words fix ſuch an Abſurdity upon it; let us not entertain, even in our moſt retired Imaginations, any ſuch Opinion, or Notion, as doth effectually lay this Scandal upon the moſt holy Religion that ever yet appeared in the World,

4. GIVE me leave to put you in mind of thoſe many plain, unexceptionable, Texts of the *New Teſtament*, by which I ſo fully proved, in the former part of my preſent Deſign, that the actual Amendment of our bad Lives, and the Practiſe of all Holineſs and Virtue, was indiſpenſably required of us in the Goſpel-Diſpenſation; and to argue from thence that it cannot be the Intent of any Paſſage, in the ſame *New Teſtament*, to fix Salvation upon any external Acts of Religion, unaccompanied with Holineſs; or paid to Almighty God in order to appeaſe him for

for our Continuance in our Sins. Remember particularly Two Paſſages: the one of our bleſſed *Lord* himſelf; the other of St. *Paul*, the ſame *Apoſtle* who applies to *Chriſtians* this general Declaration in the Text. SERM. X.

THE firſt is that in *Matth.* vii. 22, 23, *Verſes:* where, after our Lord hath declared that it is not the calling upon his Name, without doing his Father's Will, that can ſave us at laſt, He goes on farther, *Many will ſay to me in that Day, Have we not propheſied in thy Name; and in thy Name have caſt out Devils; and in thy Name done many wonderful Works? and then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity.* So that, ſuppoſing Perſons can even plead at laſt that they have not only profeſſed his Religion; but done many Things, beyond the common Pitch of Believers, by the Power of his Name: yet they are in a deſperate Condition, if they be found to be *Workers of Iniquity.* And if it ſhall fare thus with Profeſſors of ſo extraordinary a Rank: what ſhall we ſay to Thoſe who truſt to be accepted at laſt for the ſake of much more inconſiderable Performances? Muſt not *they* expect

SERM. X. pect as certainly to hear the ſame Sentence; *Depart from me, ye that work Iniquity?*

THE other Paſſage is in St. *Paul*'s Second *Epiſtle* to *Timothy*, in the Second *Chapter*, the 19th Verſe: *Let every one that nameth the Name of Chriſt, depart from Iniquity:* from whence it is evident that this *Apoſtle* could not be of that Opinion that *naming the Name of Chriſt*, or *calling upon the Name of the Lord*, in the Words of the Text, was ſufficient for Salvation, without *departing from Iniquity*. For if He had taught any ſuch Doctrine, it might have been eaſily retorted upon him by any profeſſed Chriſtian, who had a Reſolution of continuing in his Sins, What neceſſity is there for *departing from Iniquity*, when it is declared that *whoſoever calleth upon the Name of the Lord*, or *nameth the Name of Chriſt*, ſhall be ſaved, without this Departure from Iniquity?

MULTITUDES of other Paſſages might be alleged from the ſame St. *Paul*, for the Neceſſity of Holineſs; and the Condemnation of Sinners at laſt: which all contradict the Pretenſe of ſuch as would fix the contrary upon ſome of his Expreſſions. But I muſt

not

not be always repeating them. Yet it is worth while to remember that theſe are the profeſſed Chriſtians, of whom He forewarns *Timothy*, ch. iii. v. 5. under the Character of thoſe who *have a Form of Godlineſs, but deny the Power thereof:* whom he eſteems no better than Scandals to the Chriſtian Profeſſion; *Enemies to the Truth*; *Men of corrupt Minds*; *and reprobate concerning the Faith*, v. 8. SERM. X.

5. IF we conſider the Nature, Tendency, and Deſign, of all thoſe external Acts of Religion and Worſhip, in which ſome Chriſtians are inclined to place ſo great a Confidence; we ſhall find it a great affront to Almighty God; and the moſt groſs Abuſe and utter Perverſion of their Deſign, to reſt in them; to place our Hopes in them; and to make the Performance of them the Ground of our Expectation of the Favour of God, whilſt we continue in the Practice of known Sins. For the great End of the *Chriſtian Religion* is not that Men ſhould pay external Homage to Almighty God; but that their internal Tempers, and the whole Courſe of their Lives, ſhould be regulated by a deep and conſtant Senſe of God, and of a Judgment

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ment to come. To keep up this Senſe, and render it effectual; and to encourage others to profeſs, and carry forward, the ſame End; public Aſſemblies of Chriſtians were inſtituted, and appointed, for the united Acknowledgment of God, and their Saviour; for the more ſolemn Obligation of themſelves to the Duties of their Religion; for the praying to God, the hearing his Word, and the partaking of the *Lord's Supper*.

Now what is Prayer to God, if it be not a ſincere Acknowledgment of his Sovereignty, and our Dependency; of his Authority, and our Duty? And what is this, but an Affront, if we know, and own, our Obligations to ſerve and obey him; and yet continue wilfully to diſobey and diſhonour him? Or, if we imagine to put a Cheat upon him, and to ſatisfy him with the *Fruit of our Lips*, whilſt our Hearts are far from him, and entirely indiſpoſed to render him that Service which our Mouths own to be due to him? What is this Prayer, unleſs it influence us to Obedience? And why can we be ſuppoſed to ask of God his Aſſiſtance, and Holy Spirit; if we be reſolved not to make uſe of

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it, and continue to ſtand out againſt all its Motives, and Offers? SERM. X.

AGAIN, What can we conceive that hearing God's Word could be intended for; unleſs for the Practice of what we hear? Now, ſuppoſe that a Servant of an Earthly Maſter ſhould run with Zeal every Day to receive his Commands, and hear his Will; eagerly attending to it, and ſeeming to imbibe it greedily; whilſt all the time He is reſolved not to perform it, or conſtantly goes away to his former Courſe of Negligence and Diſobedience: would not this be juſtly eſteemed the higheſt Affront, and greateſt Indignity, to his Maſter; and the utter Abuſe of his Maſter's Deſign in calling upon him to hear his Duty? And thus it muſt be in Religion. Hearing can be only in order to our knowing our Duty; and knowing our Duty can be for no other End, but the doing it: and in all Caſes, both of them are ſo far from excuſing any who neglect it, that they are ever eſteemed by Men the great Aggravations of that Neglect. *To whom much is given, of Him much will be required. He that knows his Maſter's Will, and doth it not, ſhall be beaten with many Stripes:*

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Stripes: proportionable to his Knowledge, ſhall be his Puniſhment. How contrary to ſome of his Diſciples, who pretend to ſcreen themſelves with their Knowledge? They hear greedily, and know a great deal: and from hence argue that they are what He approves; and that this their Zeal in *hearing*, ſhall cover their Crime in not *doing* his Will.

THIS is what St. *James* warns all Chriſtians againſt; the reſting in the external Action of hearing. *Be ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own ſelves*, James i. v. 22. and he goes on to compare a Man, who comes to hear his Duty, and goes away and neglects it, to a Man that looks into a Glaſs; and preſently goes away, and forgets his own Countenance. The Man can conſult the Glaſs with no other Deſign, but to ſee ſomething relating to his own Face; which he preſently forgets, as much as if he had not conſulted it. The Chriſtian can hear the Word for no other End, but to know his Duty: and yet, his Behaviour ſhews that he goes away and immediately forgets it. And thus the End of hearing; the only End to which it can ſerve; is totally neglected and perverted.

OF

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OF ſuch *Hearers* as theſe, remember what our *Lord* himſelf pronounces, *Matth.* vii. 26. at the end of the longeſt Diſcourſe, He is recorded to have made; and that, in which it was plainly his Deſign to preach Morality, and reſcue Virtue from the Cloud which had been caſt over it. *Every one*, ſaith He, *that heareth theſe Sayings of mine, and doeth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh Man which built his Houſe upon the Sand: And the Rain deſcended, and the Floods came, and the Winds blew, and beat upon that Houſe; and it fell, and great was the Fall of it.* Such is the Man, we ſee, who builds his Hope of Salvation upon his bare hearing the Word of God with Greedineſs, without a conſcientious Practice of what he hears. The Woman in the Goſpel who heard with Delight the Words of Life, as they proceeded out of our *Lord*'s own Mouth, lift up her Voice, and ſaid unto him, *Bleſſed is the Womb that bare thee.* But he ſaid, *Yea rather, Bleſſed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it*, Luke xi. 27, 28. So ready was He to lay hold on every Opportunity of aſſuring his Diſciples, that their Happineſs

SERM. X. Happineſs depended upon their doing what they heard, and knew, to be their Duty.

THE like may be ſaid of partaking of the Lord's Supper: which was intended for the united Profeſſion of our Faith in Chriſt; and the open Acknowledgment of our Obligations to live as becomes his Diſciples. And what then can it be, to rely for Salvation upon the outward Act of communicating; or the preſent Fit of Devotion in which we find our ſelves, ſeparated from, and void of, all Influence upon our Lives, and Practice: what can this be, I ſay, but to mock our bleſſed Saviour; to celebrate his Sufferings, and join in afflicting him; to own our ſelves his Diſciples, and behave our ſelves as his Enemies; to contradict the Deſign of the Duty; and to fly to that *Religious Rite* for Refuge from the Puniſhment of Sin, which was inſtituted for a perpetual Memorial againſt Sin, and deſigned as one of the greateſt Motives againſt the Dominion and Power of it?

NOTHING, I think, can be plainer than that thus to depend upon the external Acts of Devotion and Religion, for Salvation; without that Holineſs of Life which they were deſigned to further and promote; is one of

of the greateſt Inſtances of Ingratitude and Preſumption that can well be thought of; a formal Mockery of Almighty God and our bleſſed Saviour; a Contradiction to the *End* and Deſign of the external Duties themſelves; and a fatal Deluſion and Deceit upon our own Souls: it being certain that our Performance of theſe external Duties is ſo far from being an Excuſe; that it will be the greateſt Aggravation of a wicked Life. SERM. X.

AND now, if theſe Things be ſo; what muſt we ſay of ſome ſort of Chriſtians? They come to theſe external Parts of Religion for Comfort. With Hands, and Eyes lifted up, and an Air of the higheſt Devotion, they will call upon the Name of the Lord, perform the public Acts of Worſhip; hear his Word with Greedineſs; and perhaps partake of his Table. But here they reſt. The ſame unmortified Luſts and Paſſions which they bring with them, they carry back again: and return, day after day, to take their Rounds of what they call Religion; in order to flatter themſelves, the more plauſibly, into a Fancy that they are not wholly devoted to Sin, and the World. And if they be a little eaſy themſelves in this Method; they are apt

SERM. X. to think that Almighty God is eaſy with them likewiſe. But it is high time to awake out of this Dream. It is the Paradiſe of Madmen; and a State of the deepeſt Folly and Miſery. It is high time to conſider what Religion is: that it is not the being profeſſed Chriſtians; or Members of the beſt Church in the World; or Frequenters of the public Worſhip; or attentive Hearers of God's Word, that can at laſt avail us; without living as becomes Chriſtians; without adorning the Church we boaſt of, by an exemplary Holineſs; without manifeſting a deep Senſe of God in all our Converſation; and without doing that Will of our heavenly Father, which we pretend to hear with ſo much readineſs.

AND God grant that all of us may ſo conſider theſe Things, as to let them have their due Influence upon all our future Behaviour, through *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord! *Amen!*

SER-

The Power of Charity to cover Sins, conſidered.

SERMON XI.

1 *PET.* iv. 8.

And above all things have fervent Charity among your ſelves: for Charity ſhall cover the multitude of Sins.

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THE Deſign which I am now proſecuting, obligeth me to take notice of ſuch Paſſages of Scripture as any profeſſed Chriſtians may, on any Account, be apt to interpret to a very bad Purpoſe: that is, to the giving themſelves Encouragement to hope for God's future Mercy, for the Sake of his Son: even whilſt they continue in the habitual Practice of known Sins. And the Words which I have now read to you, as well as ſome others in the *New Teſ-*

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tament to the ſame purpoſe, ſeem, at firſt reading, and taken by themſelves, to be as likely to be abuſed this way, as any we can well pick out: which, therefore, I now deſign carefully to conſider; in order to prevent any ſuch fatal practical Miſtake as may endanger the Salvation of thoſe who profeſs the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt.

THE *Apoſtle* is, in this Verſe, after the moſt earneſt manner, preſſing upon the Chriſtians to whom he writes, the moſt fervent and unconfined Love towards one another, *Above all things, have fervent Charity among your ſelves:* as his great Maſter had frequently, in the moſt pathetic manner, exhorted his Followers to love one another. From which Words, *Charity among your ſelves*, it is evident that He is not in this place, preſſing upon them Love in the moſt comprehenſive Senſe poſſible; or the Love of God, which is a diſtinct part of the Law of Chriſt; but particularly the Love of one another.

NOR is it any Objection againſt this (which is indeed plain from the very Words) that the Form of Expreſſion, with which the *Apoſtle* introduceth them, ſeems too much

much for this. For the Phraſe, *above all things*, in the common uſe of it, is not deſigned to be underſtood, as making the thing ſpoken of, of greater Importance than every other Point whatſoever: but only to ſignify that the Matter is of great Importance; and that there was great Occaſion, perhaps from ſome manifeſt Failure amongſt the Perſons ſpoken to, to preſs upon them this Particular, at this time, above all others. Thus, to give one plain Inſtance, St. *James*, in the *fifth* Chapter of his *Epiſtle*, at the 12th *ver.* brings in the Prohibition of Swearing, after the ſame manner, *But above all things my Brethren ſwear not.* Not that any one can imagine but that other Crimes, condemned by the Goſpel, were full as much to be avoided by Chriſtians, or were of a leſs heinous nature than this: but that He had ſome more than ordinary preſent Occaſion to remind them of their Duty in this Particular; and in an eſpecial manner to charge them not to be guilty of this Vice. So likewiſe, in the Caſe before us, there may be ſuppoſed very good Reaſon for St. *Peter*, at that time, to preſs upon the *Chriſtians* to whom He wrote, the Love of one

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another, *above all things*; becauſe they either had offended particularly againſt this Law, or were moſt likely to do ſo; without putting ſuch a Senſe upon this common Form of Expreſſion, as if He muſt mean by it any thing more, and greater, than what his own Words profeſs; *viz. fervent Charity among themſelves.*

THIS might ſuffice to account for the manner of his introducing this Duty: but it is fit likewiſe to conſider that the Love of one another, conſidered as a Duty diſtinct from the Love of God and all other Duties; the Forgiveneſs of one another; the bearing with, and tenderly regarding one another, is ſo peculiar a Branch of Chriſtianity; is ſo much inſiſted on by Chriſt himſelf, as the indiſpenſable Condition of our Happineſs, and that which He came down from Heaven in an eſpecial manner to implant, and encourage in the Minds and Manners of Men; that an Apoſtle, and Preacher of the ſame Goſpel, might well, in ſpeaking to Chriſtians, put them in mind, in a very particular manner, to regard this peculiar Branch of their Profeſſion; that Love of one another, by which all Men were to know they were

were Chriſt's Diſciples, and to ſee them di- SERM. XI.
ſtinguiſhed from the reſt of an unfriendly, and ſelfiſh World about them.

IT is, therefore, without doubt, as the Words themſelves ſhew, Love to one another, peculiarly ſo called, or *a fervent Charity among themſelves*, that St. *Peter* is preſſing upon them with ſuch Vehemence: and which he urgeth farther by this Conſideration; *for Charity*, i. e. this Charity to one another, of which He is ſpeaking, *ſhall cover the multitude of Sins.* With reſpect to which Words, all my preſent Deſign is to guard againſt any fatal practical Miſtake, by conſidering in what Senſes they may poſſibly, or probably, be underſtood; and ſhewing that no Encouragement can be drawn from theſe or the like Words, taken in any Senſe of which they are capable, to induce Chriſtians to hope for Salvation on account of their *loving* one another, or forgiving one another, without forſaking their own Sins, and entering upon an holy Courſe of Life in other reſpects.

INDEED, it is very obſervable that there are none leſs likely to ſtand in need of the Abuſe of this Text than ſuch as are truly cha-

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ritable; and ſincerely love their Neighbours; and are heartily diſpoſed to forgive their Offenſes againſt themſelves: that none have fewer Faults to cover, than ſuch as theſe; or are leſs likely to take Refuge in their *Charity*, to indulge themſelves in any thing evil. For, Did any of us ever know one truly charitable Man; I mean, charitable in a regular and ſtated Courſe, and in an eminent Degree; who willingly allowed himſelf in the habitual Practice of any known Vice; or in any ſort of Tranſgreſſion of God's Law? On the contrary, tho' we may have known a very vicious Man do particular Acts of Liberality, and ſhew an uncommon Generoſity upon ſome uncommon Occaſion; perhaps out of an ill-gotten Stock, and to ſupport a great Temporal Intereſt: yet, did we ever know any Man, who continued in a courſe of a *multitude* of known *Sins*, to be regularly charitable in a great degree; and always diſpoſed and ready to forgive and overlook all Offenſes againſt himſelf? But yet it is fitting ſometimes to do more than may be ſtrictly neceſſary, in order to take away all Pretext from ſuch Men, as may fancy themſelves poſſeſſed of a Charity which they

they have not; and take Courage from thence to preſume upon the Mercy of God. To return therefore, to what I propoſed, SERM. XI.

I. IT is not at all improbable that the *Apoſtle*, when he declares that our *Charity ſhall cover*, or covers, *the multitude of Sins*, means that it will, or doth, cover the Sins of *others*; and not our own: which Interpretation at once cuts off the Ground of the Miſtake, ſuppoſed to be founded upon this Declaration. And ſuppoſing him to ſpeak of the Sins of others; it may be, as it hath been by ſeveral Interpreters, underſtood two ways.

1. IT may ſignify that our Charity and Love to others will incline us to *cover*, that is, to hide ſo as to forgive, and not to revenge or puniſh, all the Offenſes of others againſt our ſelves. So that the Apoſtle may exhort the Chriſtians to have a fervent inward Affection for one another, on this Account; becauſe this fervent Love of one another will incline them to overlook and forgive all the Offenſes of others againſt themſelves: which is ſo main a part of the Evangelical Law, and ſo acceptable in the Eyes of God. Againſt this

SERM. XI. this Interpretation there may be *Two Objections* raiſed.

1. THE firſt is, that the Phraſe, which is rendered *to cover Sins*, is always in other places uſed with reſpect to God's covering our Sins; and not to our covering the Offenſes of others againſt our ſelves. But this will not be of great force, becauſe, tho' this may poſſibly be found true, yet, it is to be looked upon as a Matter purely accidental; and not ariſing from any Impropriety in applying the Word to the Sins of others: it being of that nature, that it is full as apt to expreſs our covering, ſo as to pardon the Offenſes of others, as it is to denote God Almighty's covering, ſo as to pardon our Offenſes. Juſt as the Word *forgive* is uſed both of God's forgiving our Sins, and of our forgiving one another: So may the Word *Cover* be, in it ſelf, equally proper in both Caſes; and the Circumſtances or Words of any particular Paſſage of Scripture be reaſonably left to determine to which it is deſigned by the Writer to belong. If the Word which is tranſlated *forgive*, had happened to have been generally uſed in ſpeaking of God's forgiving us; this would not have been a Proof that it might

might not have been uſed, in one or two places, where our Forgiveneſs of one another was ſpoken of: and the ſame may be ſaid with reſpect to the Word *Cover*; which is equally applicable to both Caſes. From whence it follows, that no Argument can be drawn from hence to prove that it may not as properly and juſtly be ſaid that Charity *covers* the Offenſes of others againſt us, as that it *covers* our Offenſes againſt God. Indeed, if there were any thing peculiar in the Word, which made it abſurd to apply it to any thing but our own Sins againſt God; a critical Argument might be drawn from hence againſt this Senſe. But when the Word is frequently uſed in many other Caſes, and applied to many other Things; nay, is only in a metaphorical Senſe uſed for Forgiveneſs, or taking no notice of, Sins; nothing can be urged from hence againſt uſing it in all Caſes, in which it is equally proper. Beſides, as I hope to make out by and by, this very Word and Phraſe is uſed by St. *James*, with reſpect to the Sins of others. SERM. XI.

2. IT may ſeem to ſome a little abſurd to make the *Apoſtle* preſs Chriſtians with ſo much Vehemence to mutual Love; not by declaring

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declaring the future Reward of it, but by laying before them one main Effect and Branch of it, as a Motive to engage them to endeavour after that Love. But if we consider what a Stress the Gospel layeth upon our Placability, and Forgiveness of one another; we shall not much wonder to find an *Apostle*, earnestly pressing Christians to labour after that inward Disposition, which will produce such an Effect; so necessary to their own Happiness. Let us labour after a fervent Charity, or Love for one another; for this will dispose us readily to *cover*, to pass by, overlook, and forgive, the greatest Number of Offenses of others against our selves: This, I say, is no small Argument to Christians, who know that this is the way to their own Forgiveness, and Happiness; and a Condition, without which they cannot hope to have their own past Sins covered by Almighty God. The like way of speaking is used by St. *Paul*, Rom. xiii. 8. where He exhorts the Christians to *love one another*, because *He that loveth another* may be said to have *fulfilled the Law*: that is, because, if we truly love one another, this will induce us to do no Mischief, but

but all poſſible Good, to our Neighbour; and ſo to come up to what is required of us by God, with reſpect to our Neighbour. which muſt be a great and ſubſtantial Motive to any Chriſtian to endeavour after ſuch a Love, and Charity. SERM. XI.

2. THE ſecond way, in which the Words of the Text may be interpreted, with reſpect to the *Sins* of *others*, is this; that, if we have a *fervent Charity* for others, this will engage us to ſeek after the Converſion of ſuch as are Sinners, and ſo our Love to the Souls of Men, ſhewing it ſelf by turning many to Righteouſneſs, will be the Occaſion of God's covering, or pardoning, their Sins, who are ſo turned from a Life of Sin, to all holy Converſation, and Godlineſs. This is, indeed, a ſafe Senſe of the Words. But I cannot think it ſo probable that the Apoſtle could mean this; becauſe it is unlikely that the Chriſtians to whom He wrote ſhould ſo underſtand him: ſince He doth not make the leaſt mention, or give the leaſt hint, of that Converſion of Sinners, upon which this Interpretation wholly depends. If this had been the thing in his View; it is hardly poſ-

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ſible to ſuppoſe but that He would have once mentioned what He principally intended.

I GRANT, indeed, that there is a Paſſage at the latter end of St. *James*'s *Epiſtle*; which in Words is parallel to this in St. *Peter*: about which it is now fit to ſay ſomething. The very laſt Words of that *Epiſtle* are theſe, *Let him know that He who converts a Sinner from the Error of his way, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall cover a multitude of Sins*, the very Words uſed by St. *Peter*. Where indeed it is very natural to interpret the Words to ſignify, that by converting a Sinner to Righteouſneſs we *ſave a Soul from Death*; and are the Occaſion of God's not puniſhing thoſe many Sins, which if they had been continued in, muſt have laid the Sinner open to the Divine Vengeance: which is a Conſidetation enough to move any ſincere Chriſtian to that Work. Nor is it any Objection againſt this Interpretation, that *ſaving a Soul from Death*, and *covering a multitude of Sins* in this Senſe, are the ſame thing, in other Words; when the Apoſtle ſeems to propound them as two diſtinct Motives: becauſe there are numberleſs Inſtances, in ſacred and profane Writers of

of the beſt Rank, of the like Tautology to this; *viz.* the expreſſing the preſent Sentiment of their Minds, at the ſame time, after ſeveral ways, and yet ſtill to the ſame Purpoſe. SERM. XI.

BUT here we ſee, when St. *James* meant particularly to ſignify to Chriſtians that it was by Converſion of Sinners that they might be Inſtruments of *covering a multitude of Sins, which* was a great and God-like Work; that He doth not ſpeak of Charity in general: but very particularly and plainly points out to them that particular Branch of it, by which *a multitude of Sins* might be *covered.* And this is an Argument why St. *Peter* probably had not this in his View: becauſe, if He had, there is no reaſon to think but that He would have ſaid ſo, as plainly as St. *James* did; or, at leaſt, that He would have given ſome Hint, ſufficient to have led us to underſtand Him to the ſame Purpoſe. Nor is the uſe of the ſame Expreſſion ſufficient to ſhew that they both meant the ſame thing: it being full as proper for St. *Peter* to tell Chriſtians that their Love to one another would engage them to forgive one another's Offenſes, without

SERM. XI. out reſenting or puniſhing them; as for St. *James* to tell other Chriſtians that their converting a Sinner would be the means of his paſt Sins being covered, ſo as to be forgiven by God. This ſhews us that, as the Word *Cover* is applied to ſeveral other things as well as *Sins*; ſo, may the Expreſſion of *covering Sins*, or *a multitude of Sins*, be uſed with reſpect to very different Caſes, and with very different Views.

THIS, therefore, is the firſt general Propoſition I lay down, that theſe Words may be ſo interpreted, at leaſt one way, very probably, as to reſpect only the covering the Sins of others from Puniſhment; and not our own. And if this be the Intent of the Apoſtle in this place; the Inference is plain, that all Ground is removed of building upon it any ſuch Opinion, as that any degree of any ſort of Charity will *cover our own* Sins: ſince, according to this Interpretation, all that is here ſaid, is that our Charity will cover, and overlook, the Failings and Offenſes of others. Nay, if this be but a poſſible Interpretation of the Words; as long as it is free from all Hazard; who would be ſo weak as to venture his Eternity, and

and Salvation, upon the Poſſibility of any other Senſe, not ſo certainly ſafe, and ſecure? But leſt any Sinner ſhould think himſelf too hardly dealt with; and not indulged and ſoothed, ſo much as he may imagine this *Paſſage* to have indulged him: let us proceed farther, and, in the *ſecond place*,

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II. LET us ſuppoſe that the *Apoſtle* intended in the Text to exhort and allure *Chriſtians* to *Charity* amongſt one another, by telling them that *Charity* would *cover the multitude of* their own *Sins:* and yet we ſhall find, upon a due Examination, how ſmall a Conſolation this, or any the like Aſſertion, rightly underſtood, can afford to any *Chriſtian* who continues in his Sins. And, under this Head, it is my Deſign to take notice of *three* or *four* ſeveral Paſſages, which may give unſtable Men occaſion of impoſing upon themſelves.

As to the Words of the Text; ſuppoſing it be affirmed by St. *Peter* that *Charity ſhall cover the multitude of* our own *Sins*; I ſay,

1. IT is highly unreaſonable to interpret this, as if He meant that it ſhould atone for the wilful Sins in which we ſtill continue: becauſe to ſay this of any thing, is to con-

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tradict, as I have often obſerved, the whole Tenour of the Goſpel, in which *the Wrath of God is revealed*, without Exception, *againſt all Unrighteouſneſs*. This, therefore, cannot be fixed upon any obſcure Words of the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel: whoſe Buſineſs it was to declare this *Wrath of God:* it being one certain Rule to go by, not to fix a Senſe upon any particular Paſſage, contrary to the main Deſign, and Tenour, of the whole.

2. IT is contrary to St. *Peter*'s own Declarations, and moſt earneſt Exhortations, in this very Epiſtle: who beſeecheth the Chriſtians to whom He wrote, *to be holy in all manner of Converſation, as He that called them is holy*, ch. i. 15. *and to abſtain from fleſhly Luſts which war againſt the Soul*, ch. ii. v. 11. and the like. Now in vain did He do this; and to no purpoſe were all his Exhortations: if He can be ſuppoſed to tell them after all, that tho' they ſhould *not be holy in all manner of Converſation*; tho' they ſhould *not abſtain from fleſhly Luſts*; yet they might be ſecure of the Favour of God; that, if they did but take care to love one another, that would *cover* all. So that

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if we would not make St. *Peter* contradict and deſtroy his own Deſign; we muſt not make him ſpeak after this manner. SERM. XI.

BUT if any ſhould ſay that St. *Peter* means it of a moſt comprehenſive and extenſive Love of God, and Man: I anſwer, that He ſaith himſelf, He means it of *Charity among themſelves*; and that St. *James* hath uſed the very ſame Words of one ſingle Branch of Brotherly-Love, which are ſuppoſed, by thoſe who allege this, to be exactly parallel in meaning to theſe in St. *Peter*. This wholly takes away the Benefit of this Obſervation; and affixeth Salvation to one ſingle Branch of Charity, diſtinct from other Virtues.

AND here, having mentioned the *Paſſage* in St. *James* again; I muſt obſerve of *that* likewiſe, that, ſuppoſing the *Apoſtle* to mean by it, that a Chriſtian by *converting a Sinner doth cover*, or make an Atonement for, his own Sins; yet, it cannot there be underſtood of the Sins he continues in; but only of thoſe which He hath forſaken: becauſe the particular Branch of Charity ſpoken of there, ſuppoſeth the Neceſſity of all Sinners being converted, in order to the

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ſaving their Souls. If therefore, I convert a Sinner; yet, if I my ſelf remain a wilful Sinner againſt God's Laws in other reſpects; there is the ſame Neceſſity of my being converted, in order to the ſaving my Soul, that there was for the Converſion of the other, about whom I have been labouring. But if it were ſufficient to convert another; though the Converter himſelf remain a wilful habitual Sinner; ſuppoſing that another ſhould afterwards convert this Man himſelf from his Sins; it cannot be ſaid, as this Paſſage affirms, that He *ſaves a Soul from Death*, becauſe it was ſaved before by his having converted another: and then likewiſe, all the Buſineſs any Man hath to do, is to endeavour to chuſe out ſome Sinner, and by all means to labour his Converſion; upon which He may be ſure of God's Favour, let his own Life be what it will. But what then ſignifieth the *Goſpel* of *Jeſus Chriſt?* and the Terrors of the Lord diſplayed in it againſt Sinners; if ſuch a Senſe can be fixed upon any part of it? It remains, therefore,

3. THAT, if St. *Peter* meant the Words of the Text with reſpect to our own Sins, all his Intention was to ſay that our loving one

one another; our kind Regards; our Placability and good Nature; our Forgiveneſs and Forbearance of one another, would engage Almighty God to forbear the Puniſhment of us, or to forgive to us our ſelves thoſe manifold Sins, which we have ever been guilty of towards Him, in Time paſt: not thoſe which we ſtill indulge our ſelves in; but thoſe which we have forſaken. For I muſt obſerve to you that this is the Peculiarity belonging to that great Virtue of loving one another, ſo as to be ready to forbear, and forgive; *viz.* that, for the ſake of *that*, God will forgive us the Sins which we have forſaken: but that, without it, (that is, unleſs we forgive others, our Neighbours and Brethren;) even thoſe Sins which we have formerly been guilty of; tho' we have forſaken them, and tho' God had, upon that, heretofore forgiven them; ſhall be remembred againſt us, ſolely on the Account of our implacable and unforgiving Temper of Mind. SERM. XI.

IF St. *Peter*, therefore, ſpeaks of *our own Sins*, as *covered* by our Love to others; I take him to ſay what our Lord himſelf affirmed, *Matth.* vi. 14. *If ye forgive Men their Treſpaſſes, your heavenly Father will*

SERM. XI. *alſo forgive you:* to the right Interpretation of which Words, what I have already ſaid will lead all Chriſtians who are not reſolved to impoſe upon themſelves. The Interpretation which I mean is this, that, if they forgive the Treſpaſſes of others, God will likewiſe forgive them the Sins which they have forſaken, and amended: but, if they do not forgive others, that even thoſe Sins which God had formerly remitted to them, on account of their firſt Faith, or Amendment, ſhall be again accounted for, and ſeverely puniſhed upon them in the other World. And thus *Chriſt* himſelf ſeems to have explained it in the Parable, *Matth.* xviii. 3. in which the *Lord* puniſheth his Servant for the Debt which He had once forgiven him, only becauſe afterwards He would not forgive the ſmall Debt of one of his Fellow-Servants.

To draw towards a Concluſion; If our Lord, in his Account of the great Day, ſpeaks of *Alms-giving* only; we ſee, by the forementioned Text, and multitudes of others, that it was not his Deſign there to ſpeak of every thing neceſſary; but only to ſhew the great Acceptableneſs of that Branch of

of Charity to God Almighty; and what ſtrict Enquiry there would be made, at the Great Day, into the Practice of this Virtue: but that we muſt not ſo interpret it, as to render void his other plain Declarations about the abſolute Neceſſity of all the other Inſtances of Goodneſs and Holineſs. SERM. XI.

IF, in any other Places of Scripture, or in the Apocryphal pious Writers, *Alms-giving*, or any ſort of Charity, be ſpoken of as an *Atonement for Sins*; or particularly, in any of the firſt Chriſtian Writers: it is evident how a Chriſtian muſt underſtand ſuch Expreſſions. Every thing that is commendable; Every ſingular Act of Piety, or Charity, may be, by a Figure of Speech, called a *Sacrifice*, as it is offered to the Honour and Service of God by thoſe who perform it rightly: or an *Atonement*, as it may be ſaid to make ſome Amends for a paſt Life of contrary or vicious Actions; juſt as a preſent Regard and Friendſhip, and the ſerving any Man in a very remarkable Matter of Importance, may be called an Atonement for a paſt State of Diſſervice and Diſreſpect; without ſuppoſing any ſuch ſingle Actions to be any Satisfaction, or Atonement, for multi-

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tudes of Affronts which we continue, upon many more Occaſions, ſtill to offer Him.

IF any Writers, of good Authority, have parallell'd the *Atonement* of *Mercy* with that of *Baptiſm*; this ſhews ſtill farther that they could mean it with reſpect to nothing but paſt Sins, forſaken and abandoned. For, as *Baptiſm* atones not for any Sins, but ſuch as were committed before it, and are utterly renounced in it; not at all for ſuch as the baptized Perſon continues in, after his Baptiſm; ſo, in like manner, cannot *Mercy*, or *Charity*, by any one who uſeth this Similitude, be thought, or ſaid, to atone for any Sins, but what are forſaken by the merciful Perſon; not at all for ſuch as He ſtill continues to be guilty of.

FROM all which there cannot be any Conſolation, or hope of Salvation, drawn to any ſuch Chriſtians, as ſtill go on to allow themſelves in the wilful Violation of any of the Laws of Chriſt: but, on the contrary, this Conſolation of making ſome ſort of amends to *God Almighty*, by ſignal Acts of *Charity*, belongs only to ſuch as, tho' Sinners in Time paſt, yet have now actually reformed their Lives.

THIS,

THIS, therefore, is the Chriſtian Doctrine about *Charity*; or rather, about that part of it which conſiſts in Forgiveneſs of others: that, on account of this, for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, God will cover and forgive our Sins, which we have forſaken; and not without it. And this is ſo far from releaſing us from the Obligation of forſaking them; that it ſuppoſeth it done, and adds to it the Obligation of our imitating God Almighty in forgiving one another: which God grant we may all do, *&c.* SERM. XI.

SER-

Of relying upon the Merits of Chriſt, for Salvation.

SERMON XII.

Firſt Epiſtle of St. *JOHN*, Ch. II. part of the 1ſt and 2d Verſes.

If any Man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous: and he is the Propitiation for our Sins.

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IN this Paſſage, the *Apoſtle* declares that it is for the ſake of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and on account of his Sufferings, that the Sins committed by his Diſciples will be forgiven by Almighty God. Now from this, and the like Declarations in the *New Teſtament*, many profeſſed Chriſtians have taken occaſion to frame to themſelves ſuch Notions concerning the Merits of Chriſt, and the Sacrifice of his Death, and his Interceſſion with

with the *Father*, founded upon theſe; as may comfort themſelves in their Continuance in Sin, and take off from their Minds all that Uneaſineſs which might otherwiſe ariſe from the Reflexion on their own wilful Demerits, and Unworthineſs. Which fatal Proceeding of Chriſtians addicted to their Luſts and Paſſions, makes it neceſſary particularly to conſider this Point; in order to rectify ſo pernicious a Miſtake. And to this End, I propoſe at this time SERM. XII.

I. To lay down the Doctrine of the *New Teſtament*, concerning the Merits of *Chriſt*; or the Effect of his Sufferings, with reſpect to the Pardon of our Sins, and our future Happineſs.

II. To take more particular notice of that unworthy Abuſe of this Doctrine, of which Chriſtians, in theſe later Ages eſpecially, have been, and are guilty.

III. To ſhew the Baſeneſs and Abſurdity of this Abuſe. And,

IV. To point out to you the true, and good Uſes that Chriſtians ought to make of this Doctrine.

I. The Doctrine it ſelf, concerning the *Merits* of *Chriſt*, or the Effect of his Sufferings

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ings towards the Pardon of our Sins, and our eternal Happineſs, I have heretofore in effect propoſed: when, under the former part of my preſent Deſign, I ſhewed you that, in order to our Acceptance and final Juſtification, thro' *Jeſus Chriſt*, it is abſolutely required of us in the Goſpel, that we forſake thoſe Sins which we have been guilty of; and practiſe ſincerely an univerſal Obedience to the whole Will of God, any ways made known to us. This having been plainly made out from the moſt expreſs Declarations in the *New Teſtament*; it is enough to obſerve from hence, that, in the Words of the Text, *Jeſus Chriſt is the Propitiation for* thoſe *Sins*, which we carefully and conſcientiouſly endeavour to avoid, and forſake; not for thoſe which we wilfully continue in: that the *Merits* of *Chriſt*, ſo much talked of by ſome, are ſo great, that, for the ſake of his Sufferings, God will accept to his Favour and Mercy, ſuch as lay hold on the Terms offered by the ſame *Jeſus Chriſt*; ſuch Chriſtians as relinquiſh and abandon their Vices; and come up to that Condition of univerſal Holineſs required by Him; but not ſuch as ſtill continue, notwithſtanding

withſtanding all his Calls, and all his Denunciations, to proſecute their own vile Luſts, and to oppoſe and contradict the Will of God. SERM. XII.

THIS, I ſay, moſt manifeſtly follows from the plain Proofs formerly given, out of the New Teſtament, concerning the indiſpenſable Neceſſity lying upon Chriſtians to forſake their Sins, in order to their Pardon; and to practiſe all Virtue, in order to their Happineſs. For if theſe Conditions be plainly and expreſsly required in the Goſpel-Covenant; then it is apparent, beyond Contradiction, that, upon the Goſpel-Covenant, ſealed by the Blood of Chriſt, and entered into for the ſake of his Merits, there can be no Pardon, nor Salvation, demanded, or hoped for, but by ſuch as forſake their Sins, and obey the Moral Laws of the Goſpel: and, in other Words, that the Sufferings of Chriſt have actually procured theſe *Conditions* to be granted by Almighty God; that ſo thoſe Sinners who have forſaken their Sins, and entred upon a new Courſe of Action, may obtain Juſtification from the Guilt of their former Sins, and Eternal Happineſs in the Kingdom of Heaven.

AND

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AND who will not ſay that this is ſufficient Satisfaction to any well-diſpoſed Mind, to be aſſured, in ſuch a way, that He is accepted by God, and hath a Title to Happineſs? without which Aſſurance, the Mind of a conſidering Perſon muſt be perpetually diſturbed with Fears and Jealouſies. And who will not own that this is all that could be expected, or reaſonably wiſhed for, from a God of Holineſs, and Wiſdom, as well as of Mercy; to offer Pardon and Salvation upon theſe Conditions only? ſince by this Method He gives all the Comfort to Sinners that is poſſible, without encouraging them to continue in their Sins; and all the Diſcouragement poſſible to Vice, without making every Inſtance of it abſolutely unpardonable.

IF any reply to this, that the Merits of ſo divine, and ſpotleſs a Being as *Jeſus Chriſt*, are infinite; and therefore every thing may be hoped for from them: I anſwer, that the Queſtion is not, what the *Merits* of *Chriſt* are in themſelves; or what they might poſſibly have procured; but what the Goſpel declareth that they have actually procured for all ſincere Believers. Let them be what they will in themſelves; They can be no more to

us,

us, than what God Almighty thinks fit to make them, agreeably to the eternal Laws of Reaſon, and Wiſdom. The Mercy of God is, in a good Senſe, infinite: that is, it is bounded by nothing but his own perfect Wiſdom, and Holineſs: againſt the Laws of which Wiſdom and Holineſs it cannot act; and beyond which, it would not be a Perfection, but a Weakneſs. So likewiſe, ſuppoſing the Merits and Value of Chriſt's Sufferings to be unbounded, and infinite, conſidered without ſuppoſing the Goſpel-Covenant actually made: yet, when it pleaſed God to be moved to make a Covenant by theſe Sufferings; the Merit of theſe Sufferings, with reſpect to ſuch as God enters into this Covenant with, muſt be bounded by the plain *Terms* and *Conditions* of this Covenant. It depends upon God's Will, and his Wiſdom, what theſe *Conditions* ſhall be: and conſequently what is procured for us by theſe Sufferings can be no more than what God ſees fit; and what He declareth, they ſhall procure for us. And therefore, I ſay, let the Merits of Chriſt be never ſo unbounded, before this Covenant is ſuppoſed; let the Value of his *Propitiation* be infinite; yet it is plain they are bounded, SERM. XII.

SERM. XII. ed, as to us, as ſoon as God declares what He will do, and what He will not do, for the ſake of theſe Sufferings: which is the Buſineſs of the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt.

Now, when it is declared by this very Perſon, whoſe Merits are ſo much pleaded by ſome, that God will accept returning Sinners, upon their Amendment; and that ſuch as continue in their Sins ſhall be excluded from his Kingdom: I ſay, when He himſelf declareth this; He doth in effect declare to Chriſtians, in other words, that He hath no Merits available for any who are not reformed according to his Moral Laws; that, tho' He be the *Propitiation for* their *Sins*, yet it is for their paſt, and forſaken Sins; that the Extent and Effect of his Merits, with reſpect to his Diſciples is this, that, for the ſake of his Sufferings, God will forgive the Sins of ſuch as do at any time ſo turn to him as heartily to abhor and forſake them; and make happy all ſuch as do ſincerely ſet themſelves to the Practice of Righteouſneſs, and make an actual Progreſs in the Ways of his Commandments. Let any one but read the New Teſtament with a well-diſpoſed Mind; and He will find that This is the whole Doctrine

trine of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, concerning the Merits and Value of his Sufferings, and their Efficacy towards the Pardon and Salvation of his Followers. But though this be ſo manifeſt, yet, SERM. XII.

II. IT is as manifeſt, that there have been, eſpecially in theſe later Ages, and ſtill are, (in a very vicious Generation of Men) Multitudes of Chriſtians, who are not content with this, that God ſhould pardon the Sins which they have forſaken, for the ſake of the Merits of Chriſt: but profeſs to believe that He will pardon all the Sins which they can poſſibly continue in, till Death overtakes them; if ſo be they can but have Time to declare their Truſt in Chriſt's Merits to this Purpoſe; or, in the uſual Phraſe, to apply to themſelves, with abundance of Confidence, the Merits of their Saviour, or the Promiſes of God made to Chriſtians for the ſake of his Son Jeſus Chriſt. They ſeem to think that Chriſt's Merit excuſeth them from attempting to have any Merit in themſelves: nay, that it would derogate from, and diſparage his Merits, if they ſhould pretend to have any thing in themſelves ſo much as agreeable to the Will of God; that it would

SERM. XII. be a piece of unpardonable Preſumption in them, to pretend to imitate the Moral Perfections of God, tho' they are called *to be holy, as He is holy.*

SOMETIMES they urge that there is nothing perfect here; and no Man but what ſins: and that, if they themſelves ſtand in need of the Merits of Chriſt to ſcreen them from the Divine Vengeance; ſo do their Neighbours likewiſe. As if, becauſe the Value of Chriſt's Sufferings will atone for the Failings, and the forſaken Sins, of a ſincere Chriſtian; therefore, they muſt needs atone for the wilful and continued Tranſgreſſions of ſuch as go on to diſgrace that holy Name by which they are called, by a moſt unholy Life, and are every Day wilfully affronting their God and Saviour. How unaccountable is this? And yet there is hardly any thing more common, than for the moſt notorious and wicked Chriſtians to profane his Merits, and his Sufferings, by openly profeſſing their Truſt, and entire Confidence in them. And, what is very remarkable, the more unchriſtian and profligate Men have been in their Lives, the more ſtrong and confident ſhall you often find them in that which they

they call *Faith*, and in their fooliſh Truſt in that which belongs not to them. So that, whilſt many good Chriſtians, thro' Exceſs of Modeſty and Humility, or thro' bodily Indiſpoſition, are almoſt ſunk with the Imagination that they have not done enough to give their Hearts Ground for Confidence in the Mercies of God: you ſhall frequently find many of thoſe, who have ſtood out againſt all the Calls of God to Repentance and Amendment, and perſevered to the End in Vice and Immorality, as ſecure of his Favour at laſt, and as ſatisfied with their Proſpect into another State, by the help of their groundleſs Confidence in Chriſt's Merits, as if the Goſpel had been calculated, not to engage Men to *deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godlily*; but merely to ſpeak Peace, and Quiet, and Comfort, to the Minds of the moſt notorious Sinners, even whilſt they know themſelves not to be amended in any reſpect. SERM. XII.

BUT how great muſt the Power of the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil, be upon the Hearts of Men, when they can influence them to believe, (as it hath happened to

SERM. XII. some) that the way to glorify the Grace and Mercy of God is to multiply their Sins and Vices; that the way most largely and effectually to partake in the Merits of Christ, is to add Sin to Sin, that there may be the more to be pardoned, and the more Thanks due to him who pardons? These, and the like Absurdities, contrary to the whole Tenour of the Gospel, hath a Love to Sin imposed upon some Men; as a Refuge from the Reproaches, and Forebodings, of a guilty Conscience; and these are often found to be fixed, without the least Ground, upon such general Declarations of the Value of the propitiatory Sacrifice of Christ, and the Merits of his Sufferings, as that in the Text.

BECAUSE He is declared to be *a Propitiation for our Sins*; to be our *Advocate*, by virtue of that Propitiation, *with the Father*; *to have purged our Sins upon the Cross*; *and to have died for us Sinners*; because, in consequence of these Declarations, it hath been delivered and taught by the Churches of Christ, that, *by his one Oblation of himself upon the Cross once offered, He hath made a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole*

whole World: therefore, they argue that their Sins cannot be too many for ſuch a Sacrifice to atone for; therefore they plead that theſe Sins, thus atoned for, are of all ſorts; as well thoſe which they indulge themſelves in, to the laſt Period of their Lives, as thoſe which have been forſaken, and abandoned; abuſing the Mercy of God, and the Merits of their Saviour, to their own eternal Perdition; as will appear, if we conſider ſeriouſly, SERM. XII.

III. THE great Unreaſonableneſs, Baſeneſs, and Abſurdity, of this Abuſe. That Chriſtians ſhould ſo far forget the nature of their Religion, which hath, in the plaineſt Words, made an univerſal Holineſs indiſpenſably neceſſary; that they ſhould be ſo far from being led by the Goodneſs of God to Repentance and Amendment, that they ſhould rather take occaſion from his Love to treaſure up for themſelves Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath; that thoſe very Sufferings of Chriſt, which were deſigned as the greateſt Argument to affright them from all Sin, ſhould be made as it were the Incentive and Motive to them to continue in Sin; that the greateſt Inſtance of Love ever diſplayed before the Eyes of Men ſhould be returned in

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Affronts, and Diſobedience to God, and to his Son: Theſe are ſuch aſtoniſhing Marks of abſurd Confidence, and Baſeneſs of Temper, as cannot be parallel'd.

THE Nature, and End, of the Chriſtian Religion, plainly eſtabliſhed, muſt direct us in all our Interpretations of any of its general Declarations. And this Religion being holy, pure, and ſpotleſs; revealed by the Son of God from Heaven for the Converſion and Amendment of the World, and to teach us to forſake all Sin, and to live in all holy Obedience to God; the Wrath of God being often declared in it againſt all Unrighteouſneſs of Men: it is impoſſible that any Comfort ſhould be adminiſtred in it to ſuch as continue in Sin; becauſe this would be to deſtroy its own main Deſign, and to fruſtrate its own great End. From hence therefore it follows, that it is the higheſt Abſurdity to argue from its general Declarations concerning a Sacrifice for Sins, and a Propitiation of invaluable Merit, that this Sacrifice will be available for thoſe Sins of Chriſtians in which they ſtill wilfully continue: becauſe this is to contradict the great End of their Religion; to make all Virtue unneceſſary;

ſary; and to turn all Chriſtianity into a confident Appeal to the Merits of Chriſt. SERM. XII.

AGAIN, It is the moſt abſurd and unreaſonable thing in the World, to fix ſuch a thing as this upon Almighty God: or to ſuppoſe that He ſhould ſend a Perſon from Heaven, to live and dye here on Earth, and to teach Mankind an excellent Doctrine; and at the ſame time declare, that it is no great Matter whether they imitate his Example, or obey his Precepts, if ſo be they do but truſt in his Merits, rely upon his Sacrifice, and put their Confidence in the infinite Value of his Sufferings; that this ſhall be their Comfort here, and their Reward hereafter. Who can believe this poſſible, I ſay, that knows and conſiders what God is; an holy, and wiſe Being; at an infinite diſtance from all Sin and Iniquity? For what would this be, but to reveal a Religion from Heaven, with the greateſt ſolemnity, on purpoſe to aſſure Men that Virtue is of no great Importance; and on purpoſe to encourage Vice, and Immorality in the World? I ſay this becauſe, in truth, ſuch Pretenſes of Chriſtians do manifeſtly, and effectually, tend to nothing elſe, but to render vain all the Moral Precepts of

SERM. XII. the Gospel; and to bring a Contempt upon all that is substantially good in Religion.

AND if this be so absurd in any reasonable Creature, to fix such an Absurdity upon God; how much more absurd and intolerable must it be in a Christian, after this Revelation is made, in which the Nature of God, and his Hatred of Sin, are made known to him, to affront Almighty God with a Supposition which a very Heathen would be afraid to make? Nay, it receives a great Aggravation, when it is considered that it is by the Declaration of the Gospel only that we can know what the Merits of Christ's Sufferings are to us; and that in this they are so plainly limited, as to the Extent, and End of them, that a sincere Mind cannot mistake. I have already observed to you what is declared there; and, with how much Plainness, all who continue in their Sins, are debarr'd in that from any Benefit from the Sufferings of Christ; nay, how plainly they are assured that this very Gospel, and the Sufferings of Christ, shall be an Aggravation to their Punishment hereafter. And if, notwithstanding all the Limitations which God himself hath set to his Mercy, and to the Merits of his

his Son; theſe Perſons will make a new Co- SERM. XII.
venant, and a new Compact, for themſelves: what muſt we think of ſuch an egregious and groundleſs piece of Folly and Abſurdity?

BESIDES, how baſe and ungrateful a Temper muſt this proceed from; to make uſe of the Goodneſs of God, and thoſe Sufferings which were the higheſt Inſtance of Chriſt's Love to them, as an Encouragement to themſelves to take part with the great Enemy of God and of Chriſt? How would it ſound in the Ears of any Man of the meaneſt Capacity, to hear Chriſtians ſpeaking thus, *God ſo loved the World that He ſent his only begotten Son*; and this Son of God hath declared his Love in dying for Sinners, after an unparallell'd manner; therefore, let us affront him, and join our ſelves to his greateſt Adverſary; ſtill truſting that his Merits, and Sufferings, will make him look upon us, and treat us as his Friends? Yet, after this manner doth every Sinner argue, who reſolvedly continues a Sinner; and yet pretends to truſt in the Merits of his Saviour for Pardon, and Salvation.

TO make the Matter yet more plain; put the Caſe that any Prince ſhould ſend his own Son to a Company of profeſſed Rebels; and,

for

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for the ſake of what He ſhould do and ſuffer amongſt them, offer to be reconciled to ſuch of them as ſhould be influenced by this Method to repent, and return to their Obedience: what greater Affront, or Indignity, can one well imagine, than, if theſe Perſons, profeſſing to lay hold on his Offers, ſhould yet continue to affront him, and diſobey all his juſt Commands, as much as ever; and yet all the time plead before him the Sufferings of his Son, and argue that his Merit muſt ſcreen them from Puniſhment, which was deſigned merely to make their future Obedience accepted; and which greatly increaſeth the Guilt of their continuing ſuch Affronts, and Injuries? Would not this Appeal to thoſe Merits appear only a piece of formal Mockery; and juſtify to all the World the ſevereſt Puniſhment of thoſe who ſhould have nothing elſe to plead? Let us therefore,

IV. LASTLY, from what hath been ſaid, learn the true and good Uſes which Chriſtians ought to make of the *Merits* of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and of the Value of his Sufferings.

1. IN the firſt place, we may lawfully and juſtly plead before God the Merits of his Son, and his invaluable Sacrifice, as what He hath

hath been pleaſed to declare that He accepts, as an Atonement for thoſe Sins which we forſake, and abandon: and for the ſake of this, we may beg, with a well-grounded Aſſurance, that He will pardon all our paſt Offenſes, and whatever is amiſs in our whole Frame; and accept of our ſincere Endeavours after an univerſal Conformity to his Will in all Things. This is a ſort of *Truſt*; and indeed the only *Truſt* in the Merits of Chriſt, which we can juſtify, or from which we can reap any Comfort, or Advantage: becauſe indeed this is the only Truſt agreeable to the Nature and Deſign of the Goſpel; and to the many plain Declarations of the New Teſtament. SERM. XII.

THERE is nothing in that ſacred Book, of the great Efficacy of applying the Merits of Chriſt to our ſelves, in all Circumſtances, with an undaunted Confidence. This is a new and modern Addition to the Goſpel of Chriſt. But if we look into any Page of it, we cannot but learn from thence, that we have no Encouragement to apply theſe Merits to our ſelves, nor any juſt Ground of Satisfaction from them, unleſs we find in our ſelves a perſevering Reſolution to forſake all Vice;

SERM. XII. Vice; and a conſtant Endeavour to perfect Holineſs, whilſt we have Opportunity: and that it is the uniform Doctrine of the ſame *New Teſtament*, that thoſe who have wilfully continued Sinners to the laſt, have no part in the revealed Promiſes of God; nor conſequently the leaſt Right in the World to apply the Merits of Chriſt to themſelves in particular, which are declared to belong only to ſuch as have forſaken, and renounced their Sins. And if this be not true; then it muſt be true that the Goſpel makes no difference between a virtuous, and vicious Life; but makes Eternity depend upon ſuch a Confidence as the beſt Chriſtians often want, and the worſt generally have moſt of.

2. IN the next place, we ought all to draw a ſtrong Argument againſt all Sin, and for all holy Obedience, from thoſe very Merits, and Sufferings of *Jeſus Chriſt*, under which ſome Chriſtians would hide their continued Iniquities. For if Chriſt be the Propitiation for our Sins; then what muſt Sin be to Almighty God, who took ſo ſevere a Method to be reconciled to Sinners? and what ought it to be to Chriſtians, who know this? How hateful, and how abominable?

If

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If *God ſo loved the World, that He ſent his only begotten Son*; if this Son voluntarily humbled himſelf to the vileſt Death for us: how ought we to ſtudy to do every thing pleaſing to him; and to avoid every thing which He hates and abhors? If ſo invaluable a Price were paid; that we might be reconciled to God upon any Terms: how ought we to be moved, by the Greatneſs of this Price, to come up to all his Terms, and Conditions; and not to think ſo long upon the Price, as to forget the End for which it was paid?

Ye are bought with a Price; therefore glorify God in your Body, and in your Spirit, which are God's: ſaith St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. The *Price* paid by Chriſt to buy Us into his Service, is, in his Account, the greateſt Motive why we ſhould ſerve ſuch a Maſter faithfully. *Paſs the Time of your Sojourning here in Fear*, ſaith St. *Peter*, *foraſmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible Things, as Silver, and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Chriſt*, 1 Pet. i. 17, 18, 19. This is the *Uſe*, which the *Apoſtles* earneſtly direct *Chriſtians* to make, of the Merits of their Saviour: but they never

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ver once adviſe, or command, or ſo much as permit, them to think that they ſhall be ſaved by theſe merits, after a Life ſpent in continual Diſobedience to his Moral Laws.

LET this Doctrine, therefore, be fixed in our Minds. The Merits of Chriſt's Sufferings are ſo great, that they will atone for the longeſt Courſe of Sins; provided we have forſaken, and utterly abandoned them: but of ſuch a nature, as terribly to aggravate the Guilt and Puniſhment of thoſe Chriſtians, who take occaſion to continue in their Sins, becauſe *Chriſt* is declared to be the *Propitiation for them.*

SER-

Miſtakes about Man's Inability, and God's Grace, conſidered.

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II. *COR.* iii. 5.

Not that we are ſufficient of our ſelves, to think any thing as of our ſelves: but our Sufficiency is of God.

THE *Apoſtle*, in this *Epiſtle*, was led, by the cunning Management of ſome evil-minded Perſons amongſt the *Corinthians*, to aſſert his own *Apoſtleſhip*; and his own Right to be their Director and Inſtructor, as He had been the Founder of their Church, and of their Faith. But leſt they ſhould think that He boaſted of himſelf above meaſure; as if from Him, conſidered by Himſelf, came all their Good, and all their Happineſs of being made Partakers of

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of the *Goſpel*; He thinks fit in this Verſe to obviate this Inſinuation, and to aſſure them, that by what He had now, or any time before, ſaid to that purpoſe, He did not deſign to arrogate to himſelf the Glory of being the chief and principal Agent in this Matter; but that it was to the great Original of all Things, even to God himſelf, that they were obliged for ſo great and unſpeakable a Bleſſing. *Not that we are ſufficient of our ſelves, to think any thing as of our ſelves: but our Sufficiency is of God.* That is, Not that We *Apoſtles*, of our ſelves, did or could, lay this Scheme of Salvation: not that it is to us that the Contrivance, and Adminiſtration of this, is to be aſcribed. But our *Sufficiency*; our being able thus to contribute to your Happineſs, and thus ſucceſsfully to miniſter to your good, by preaching the *Goſpel*, is owing to God.

THAT this is the meaning of the *Apoſtle*, in theſe Words, will be evident to any one who will be at the Pains to lay together what goes before, and what follows after this Verſe. For whoever doth that, will find that the *Apoſtle* is not here ſpeaking, or thinking, of the Duty ordinarily required of Chriſtians,

Chriſtians, in order to their final Acceptance; but of a Subject entirely different from this; *viz.* of the Work of an *Apoſtle*; of the firſt Original of that *Scheme* of *Salvation* which the *Apoſtles* preached to the World; and of that Knowledge and Sufficiency which the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel had, in order to the Performance of their great Work. But tho' this be ſo plainly the meaning of the Words; yet many Chriſtians, of later Ages, have been led from this Text, and others of the like Sound, into ſuch Errors, as tend, in their own natures, to obſtruct and hinder the great Deſign of the Goſpel; and to make Men eaſy and careleſs about the Performance of thoſe Terms of Acceptance, Holineſs and univerſal Righteouſneſs, which are ſo plainly required in the Goſpel. SERM. XIII.

IT is therefore, of great Importance, to examine, and confute ſuch pernicious Miſtakes; and to ſhew that there is nothing in the *New Teſtament* to favour them. The Miſtakes at which I now particularly point, are ſuch as are founded upon a very fatal Notion of the Weakneſs, and Inability of Man; and of the part which Almighty God is to

SERM. XIII. act in the Buſineſs of Reformation, and Holineſs. For many Perſons have not been content with ſaying that their Natures are weak and frail; too eaſily carried away by the Force of that multitude of Trials which ſurround them in this State; that the *Fleſh is weak*, and their Inclinations directed with a ſtrong Biaſs towards Sin and Wickedneſs; but are likewiſe pleaſed with repreſenting themſelves in ſuch a State of Inability, and Inſufficiency, as that all Motives, and all Calls to Repentance are in vain; in ſuch a State, as that it is impoſſible for them, by any Act of their own Mind, either to pray effectually to God; or ſucceſsfully to bear any part, in the great Work of their Salvation, themſelves.

So likewiſe, with reſpect to *Almighty God*; they are not content with acknowledging that the great Deſign of their Happineſs is owing originally to Him, and is his Work; or that all their Powers and Faculties come from Him, who made them what they are; or that He is ready to aſſiſt their Endeavours, whenever they exert them; to anſwer their ſincere Prayers, and to impart to them whatever is neceſſary to their ſucceſsful running the

the Race that is ſet before them: but they take a ſort of Delight in thinking, and ſpeaking, as if Almighty God were to do all for them; as if He, in his own Time, will irreſiſtibly move them to do his Will; and as if, unleſs he thus interpoſeth, they have no Power, or Strength, to do any thing towards forſaking thoſe Sins to which they have made themſelves captive. SERM. XIII.

IN theſe Senſes do they think it for their Purpoſe, to underſtand the Words of the Text, and ſome other Expreſſions of the *New Teſtament*, concerning the Inſufficiency, and Weakneſs of Man; and the Sufficiency, and Power of God, in the Matter of Salvation. In order, therefore, to put a Stop to ſuch Notions as theſe, which naturally tend to render Men indiſpoſed to all Attempts, and Endeavours to do their Duty; I have the following Obſervations to make.

1. ST. *Paul* himſelf builds no ſuch Doctrine upon that great and ſtrong Notion He had of his own Inſufficiency; and of the Sufficiency of God. This *Inſufficiency*, I have ſhewn already, had reference to the Work of his *Apoſtleſhip*; to and his ſucceſsful Performance of it; that is, to his publiſhing, and

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enforcing, the Terms of Salvation, amidſt a Thouſand Difficulties, and a World of Hazards. But becauſe this great Work of Redemption was originally the ſole Deſign and Contrivance of Heaven; becauſe his being an *Apoſtle* was owing immediately to God; and the Succeſs of his Labours, and his own Courage and Conduct in his Office, depended upon the Providence, and the Favour of God: He doth not preſently infer that nothing was to be done by Himſelf, conſidered as diſtinct from his great Patron. But, in this very *Epiſtle*, He repreſents Himſelf, and the other *Apoſtles*, as *Workers together with God*, ch. vi. 1. and often ſpeaks of his indefatigable Endeavours to anſwer the Ends of his Office. And if He were a *Worker together with God*; He had certainly a part of his own, diſtinct from that of *Almighty God*, in this great Affair. And conſequently, as He had God Almighty's *Sufficiency* to ſupport Him, and make up his Deficiencies; ſo He had likewiſe ſome Strength and Ability of his own, for his own part. And as *God* was the *Architect*; the chief Builder, Director, and Encourager of the whole;

whole; ſo likewiſe was the *Apoſtle*, a *Worker*, under, and *together with*, Him. SERM. XIII.

IF, therefore, in that great Work of the *Apoſtleſhip*, encompaſſed at that time with ſo many Difficulties and Hazards, St. *Paul* did not mean by ſuch Expreſſions to ſignify that he himſelf had no part to act, but as forced, and impelled irreſiſtibly, by *God Almighty*; but left a part for himſelf, as well as gave to God the chief Part, and Glory, in it all: much leſs will it follow, that he meant theſe and the like Expreſſions, to ſignify that, in the Buſineſs of every ordinary Chriſtian, ſo much leſs difficult than that in which he was engaged, God Almighty was to do all, without the Concurrence of the Man himſelf; and without his having Strength and Power to bear any part in his own Happineſs. If the *Apoſtle* had ſuch Power, as to be a *Worker together* with God, in that vaſt and boundleſs Office; much more may Chriſtians, in their ordinary Spheres of Action, be ſuppoſed to have Ability to bear ſome part in the carrying forward their own Perfection here, and Salvation hereafter.

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2. BUT ſuppoſing that St. *Paul* had referred the whole to Almighty God, in the literal, and ſtrict Senſe of the Word; and left himſelf nothing but a paſſive Character; and repreſented himſelf as irreſiſtibly moved by his Almighty Arm: this having been ſaid by him merely with reſpect to ſo great, and difficult a Task, as was that of an *Apoſtle*, in thoſe firſt Days; it will not at all follow from hence, that the ſame is true, with reſpect to an Office, or Buſineſs, not ſo difficult, and hazardous. It will not ſo much as follow, that the ſame is true with reſpect to ſucceeding Miniſters, and Paſtors of the Church, in the ordinary Courſe of God's Providence; much leſs will it follow, with reſpect to the Body of Chriſtians, whoſe Task doth not take in ſo great a Compaſs. It doth not follow that becauſe Almighty God takes the whole upon himſelf, in a great, and immenſe Difficulty; therefore, He likewiſe takes the whole upon himſelf, in a Matter of much leſs Difficulty, and of a much more confined Importance.

3. THE Aſſiſtance which God affords to Chriſtians, and the part which He bears in the Work of their Salvation, is ſo far from being

being a Proof that they can do nothing towards it themselves; that it is a most powerful Argument, and made use of in the *New Testament*, to engage them to do something for themselves. *Work out your own Salvation*, saith the same St. *Paul*, *with Fear and Trembling: for it is God that worketh in you both to will, and to do*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. On this very account, use your own Strength and Power, in the Affair of Religion; because God himself, in the Christian Dispensation, affords you his Influences, and his Assistances. And indeed, what more powerful Motive can there be thought of, to engage us to hearty and uninterrupted Labour, in our Christian Warfare, than this, that we are carrying forward a Work, in which God himself is engaged; that if it fail at last, the gracious Design of God will fail thro' our Negligence; that we have so powerful an Assistant and Patron, that the Difficulty of our Work need not discourage us from attempting it, or persevering in it; that we are *Fellow-workers* together with God; and therefore should be animated to exert our selves, as all are incited to do under the Eye and Encouragement of their

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Superiors; and to do even more Work, and with more ſollicitous Concern, than we could do, if we had not ſuch a *Patron*, and ſuch an *Aſſiſtant?*

To take away the Deſpair of Succeſs, is ſo far from encouraging the Idleneſs or Neglect of any Perſon engaged in an Enterprize, that it is abſolutely neceſſary towards their having any Heart, and Courage, for the Execution of it. This *God Almighty* takes from us, by repreſenting himſelf as our Director, and Aſſiſter: and it is this which ſhould fill us with more Concern leſt the Enterprize ſhould fail; and animate us with a ſtronger Reſolution to uſe all our Endeavours. It is becauſe we have ſuch Hope of good Succeſs, under the Patronage of ſo much Wiſdom, and ſo much Power, that we ſhould be much more vigorous, and reſolute, than if we had not ſuch an Encouragement as is included in God's *working in us both to will, and to do.* And,

4. How weak ſoever we may be; ſince it is plain, from what I have already ſaid, that the Goſpel doth not ſuppoſe us in a State of utter Inability to bear any part in our own Happineſs: I ſay, our Weakneſs, or

Inability

Inability to perform the whole, our ſelves, is no Argument why we ſhould leave the whole to Almighty God; and not think our ſelves obliged to work together with Him. And yet this ſeems to have been the Ground of Miſtake in this Caſe, that the Evangelical Diſpenſation, and conſequently, the Salvation of Men, is repreſented as the ſole Contrivance and Work of God, in which we bear no part, and were uncapable of bearing any. This without doubt is true; that we could not have thought of, or entered into, ſuch a Scheme for our own Happineſs. But it doth not follow that, when He offers this Happineſs to us, He offers it to Beings, as uncapable of laying hold on it, as the very Stocks and Stones. It doth not follow, becauſe our great Benefactor prevents us with his Kindneſs, and voluntarily offers us his Benevolence, and his helping Hand to free us from the greateſt of Evils, and enſtate us in the moſt complete Happineſs; that therefore we are unable to accept this Kindneſs, and to help forward ſo good, and merciful a Deſign. No, let us acknowledge, as much as we pleaſe, our own Inſufficiency, and Inability, for ſo God-like a Work as that of recovering

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recovering us from Miſery to Happineſs; to the Glory of Him who is the *Author, and Finiſher of our* Salvation: but let us not ſooth our ſelves in Vice, under the Pretext of a falſe Humility; and look upon our ſelves as too weak to do the leaſt thing towards our own Pardon, and Salvation. For our Inability to do ſome Things, doth not infer our Inability to do others; nor doth our being incapable of the whole, taken all together, prove that we are incapable of any part.

BUT, in return to what hath been ſaid under theſe two laſt Heads, I am ſenſible that ſome other Expreſſions of the *New Teſtament* may be objected. As,

1. IT may be ſaid that the whole of this great Work of Repentance, and Salvation, ſeems, in ſome Expreſſions, to be aſcribed to God: and He to be repreſented as the ſole Agent in it. In anſwer to this I have already obſerved that the Contrivance, and Scheme, of the whole Diſpenſation, in which we have Salvation offered us, and the making and proclaiming the Terms of it, are wholly owing to Him, and to his Goodneſs; previous to any Work, or Merit, of ours: and conſequently, it is no Wonder

Wonder that *this* is wholly attributed to Him, which is indeed, literally ſpeaking, ſolely, and wholy, his Work. When any ſuch Expreſſions, therefore, come in our way, we ſhould conſider whether the Writer be not ſpeaking of this *Chriſtian Diſpenſation*, as the Work of God: And if he be, we may be ſure that this ſignifieth nothing to the preſent Queſtion. For God might be the ſole Author of this Offer, and this whole Scheme: and yet we may have Strength and Ability to do ſomething towards the laying hold on the Terms of it; towards the complying ſincerely with his Offers; and towards the finding out, and Performance, of his Will. SERM. XIII.

BUT if ſuch Expreſſions ſhould be uſed, concerning *Almighty God*, with reſpect to our receiving Benefit from this Diſpenſation, and the like; it is to be conſidered farther, that there is nothing more common in all ſorts of Writers, than to ſpeak of the chief Leader, Director, and Performer, of any Work, as if no other deſerved to be mentioned. Thus God Almighty's Favour and Holy Spirit, being the great Support and Strength of Chriſtians; it is no wonder if, according to the general Cuſtom of ſpeaking

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ing, the great Affair of Salvation be ſpoken of, as all owing to that. Juſt as any great Action, tho' executed by a great many in Conjunction, is yet frequently ſaid to be owing to *Him* particularly, who was the great Diſpoſer of all Things concurring to it; and had the chief Hand in it: ſo may it be in this Caſe, without inferring that, ſtrictly ſpeaking, no one beſides him hath any Concern in it. It is becauſe, comparatively ſpeaking, He bears the chief part; and becauſe without his favourable Concurrence nothing could ſucceſsfully be done, that He may well, agreeably to the Rules of ſpeaking, be ſometimes repreſented as the Doer of the whole. But it doth not at all follow, from ſuch cuſtomary Forms of ſpeaking, that He neither expects, nor requires, the Concurrence, and hearty Endeavours, and Pains, of thoſe to whom He is ſo good.

AGAIN, It is proper to conſider that whatever Powers, and Capacities, we have, are originally his Gift, and therefore all the good Effects of them may juſtly be aſcribed to *Him*, as to the firſt and original Author of all that we have, and all that we can do; that it is to the Concurrence of his daily Providence,

vidence, and to the Diſpoſition of all Cir- SERM. cumſtances, which is his Work, that we are XIII. indebted for every thing. Without this, we could not have the Opportunity, or Poſſibility, of knowing the *Terms* of *Chriſtian Salvation*; or of complying with them. And therefore, it may juſtly be aſcribed to Him, whatſoever is done towards our Happineſs, even by our ſelves. And, in this Senſe, without *Him*, we could neither think, nor act, to any purpoſe, in our great and moſt important Concern. But all this is very conſiſtent with our being moved, after the manner of free Agents, by the Motives he propoſeth; and by the Circumſtances in which he is pleaſed to put us.

AND then, in all thoſe parts of our Chriſtian Duty, and in all thoſe Caſes, in which his Interpoſition is requiſite to our Succeſs, He hath promiſed his Holy Spirit to them that ask it, and make uſe of it: a Spirit, which, as it was to be the Support of his *Apoſtles* in their greater Work; ſo is it, in proportion, to be the Guide, and Aſſiſter of all Chriſtians, who are ſincerely deſirous to follow it. But this implies in it that we are able, at leaſt, to ask for this *unſpeakable Gift*

of

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of God: becauſe otherwiſe it would be but mocking us to promiſe it to our Prayers. It implies indeed that this Spirit is the great Agent; the great Help to Perfection; and to a Renovation of the Mind of Sinners, and a Reformation of their Practices; ſo, that great things may be ſpoken of it: but it doth not imply that thoſe to whom it is given are only the mechanical Inſtruments of it, or any thing to that effect; any more than the Aſſiſtance of one Man granted to another, in any Affair, in which without it he could not ſucceed, ſuppoſeth that this other muſt do nothing himſelf, and make no Steps, as a voluntary Agent, towards the accompliſhing his own Ends.

WHATEVER, therefore, is ſaid, in the *New Teſtament*, or ſuppoſed to be ſaid, of *Almighty God*, as the *ſole Author* of all relating to our Salvation, may, we ſee, very juſtly be accounted for, by the common Uſage of ſpeaking, without drawing ſo ſtrange and abſurd a Conſequence from it, as deveſts Men of all Pretenſe to any part in it: eſpecially conſidering, in the laſt Place, that, in the ſame *New Teſtament*, the greateſt Care is taken, when any parts of it are addreſſed

dreſſed to Chriſtians themſelves, to urge, and preſs, and incite them, as free Agents, to the Performance of their Duty; to deal with them as if on themſelves, and on their own Endeavours, depended their Happineſs; to charge them not to be ſo ungrateful to God, as to think of leaving all to Him to do: and to threaten them with eternal Damnation, if they neglect to do what is required of them. This likewiſe will help us, SERM. XIII.

2. To anſwer the *Objection* which may be made to what I have ſaid concerning the part of Chriſtians themſelves in the Affair of Salvation: *viz.* That the *New Teſtament* ſeems to repreſent them in a *dead* and *lifeleſs* Condition; unable to help themſelves; and the like. For, ſuppoſing this, yet, that theſe, and the like, Expreſſions were not deſigned to be underſtood in any Senſe contrary to what I have ſaid, is plain from thoſe multitudes of Addreſſes, and Appeals, to Chriſtians themſelves; and from thoſe many earneſt Entreaties, Motives, Promiſes, Threatnings, in the ſame *New Teſtament*: all contrived to make them exert themſelves; all ſuch as are inconſiſtent with the Suppoſition that *God* will help them without their

own

SERM. XIII. own Help; or that they are not able to do that part, which God requireth, and inciteth, them to do.

BUT I muſt remark farther, that, if you conſider thoſe Paſſages which have this Appearance, you will find that they are chiefly, if not always, ſuch as reſpect only the State of Mankind, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, before the Light of the Goſpel brake in upon them; and before the Offers of Salvation were made, or accepted. Before that, the World was univerſally *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins:* and the Motives, to induce them to ariſe from this Death, came ſolely from God; not from themſelves. But yet the very offering them *Spiritual Life*, ſuppoſed them capable of accepting it; the very preſſing, and inciting, them to revive from that Death of Sin, ſuppoſeth that they could do what they were ſo incited to. Almighty God quickened them by theſe Motives, and Offers; but then, even in this, their accepting and complying with them muſt be, in part, their own Work; or it could never be made their Reward. As a Man that is ſtupid and inſenſible, in ſome conſiderable worldly Concerns, may be ſaid to be *dead*,

and

and *lifeleſs*; and as the Motives, and Arguments, and Perſuaſives, of Men can quicken and put Life into him; actuating him into good Reſolutions, and ſetting his Zeal on fire; and yet the Man himſelf not ſuppoſed to be unable to do any thing for himſelf, but the contrary: ſo, in the Caſe before us, a Man may be called *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*; and the Wrath of God, or the Joys of Heaven, and all the Offers of the Goſpel, may quicken him; and to theſe may the thing be aſcribed; yet, all this while, without ſuppoſing him *dead*, in a literal Senſe, or uncapable of bearing any part in the accepting theſe Offers; in the regarding theſe Motives; and in helping forward his own Happineſs. This is a figurative Expreſſion, applied to the State of Sinners: who, as they are ſaid to be *quickned* by God and his Goſpel; ſo are they very frequently called upon to conſider their Ways; to rouze themſelves out of their ſupine, and ſlothful ſtate; to *forſake that which is evil, and practiſe that which is good.* Neither therefore, is the great Part which *Almighty God* bears in our Salvation, an Argument that *He* will do all, without *Us:* nor is our Weakneſs, and Ina-

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bility, a total Incapacity to join with Him, in our hearty Endeavours and Labours. But, as his Hand is neceſſary; ſo is our own. As his Arm is powerful to ſave; ſo is our own requiſite to our Happineſs. As our Weakneſs is nothing without his Strength; ſo his Strength will be nothing to us without our Weakneſs. As he is the great Contriver, and Diſpoſer, of the whole Scheme of our Salvation, and is ready to give the *Sufficiency* of his Spirit to all who ſincerely ask it; ſo we are required, and conſequently, are able, both to ask it heartily, and to join our own Endeavours with it: on which, together with God's Aſſiſtance, our Holineſs now, and Happineſs hereafter, moſt certainly depend.

Miſtakes about Man's Inability, and God's Grace, conſidered.

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II *COR.* iii. 5.

Not that we are ſufficient of our ſelves, to think any thing as of our ſelves: but our Sufficiency is of God.

IN my former Diſcourſe upon theſe Words, I ſhewed you that it was the ſole Deſign of St. *Paul* in them, to declare, that, in the ſetting about, and executing, the difficult and laborious Work of an *Apoſtle*, He did not arrogate to himſelf the Power, and Ability, and Succeſs, which he had: but that he aſcribed his Sufficiency for this great Work, as well as his being deſigned to it, to God himſelf, who was the great Contriver of the whole Scheme of Chriſtia-

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nity; who miraculouſly called the *Apoſtles* to the carrying forward his Deſign in it; and who endowed them with Powers from above for the Execution of it. This being laid down, as the true meaning of the *Apoſtle*'s Words; I did from hence take occaſion to examine and confute the Miſtakes of ſuch Chriſtians, as have pretended to be led, by this and ſuch like Expreſſions in the *New Teſtament*, into ſuch Notions of their own Weakneſs and Inability to perform the Will of God; and of the part God Almighty is to bear in their Reformation and Amendment; as induce them to indulge their vicious Inclinations, and retain their evil Habits, under the Pretext of waiting for the Interpoſition of Heaven, and the irreſiſtible Motions of God's Spirit: without which, they think, they can do nothing towards their Salvation; and for the obtaining of which, they imagine that nothing can be done on their Parts.

I HOPE, I then made it appear that what was ſaid by St. *Paul* with reſpect to the Work of an *Apoſtle* in thoſe Days, in which almoſt inſuperable Difficulties attended it, ought not to be applied to the common Duty of all Chriſtians, in the ordinary Courſe of

of God's Providence; that St. *Paul* himſelf never ſpake of the Obedience of Chriſtians to the Moral Commands of the Goſpel, after ſuch a manner as to give Encouragement to any ſuch Opinion, as that of ſome who are not content with the Help of God, but would willingly have all irreſiſtibly done by Him; and that the Aſſiſtance afforded by God to all the honeſt Endeavours of ſincere Chriſtians, in the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, is ſo far from being an Inducement to them to leave all to be effected by *that*, that it is the moſt powerful Argument poſſible to them to exert themſelves to the utmoſt for their own Good; and made uſe of to this Purpoſe by the *Apoſtles* themſelves, and particularly by St. *Paul*. SERM. XIV.

AFTER this, I anſwered more particularly to *Two Objections:* for the preſent, ſuppoſing that in the *New Teſtament* there are ſome Expreſſions which aſcribe the whole Work of Salvation to God, and repreſent Men as dead and unactive in it. And I ſhewed, either that thoſe Expreſſions were deſigned ſolely to give to God the Glory of deſigning and contriving the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, and the Work of Redemption;

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and to deſcribe the State of the World before the Goſpel, buried in Sin, and without any Proſpect of Help, or any Poſſibility of ſuch a Relief, unleſs it had come firſt from Him: or, if any high Expreſſions of this ſort be uſed concerning the ordinary Task of the Body of Chriſtians, that they may be juſtly interpreted, by all the Rules of ſpeaking, without recurring to ſo great an Abſurdity, ſo deſtructive to the Cauſe of Virtue; and particularly, that they muſt be explained by the Tenour of plainer Texts, which all repreſent a great deal to depend upon the Endeavours of *Chriſtians* themſelves, as well as upon the Aids of God's Spirit; and are conſtantly preſſing the labouring part upon all who pretend to be in Purſuit of Happineſs.

THERE is one more *Objection* which deſerves a very ſerious Conſideration in this Debate: and which, therefore, I deſign particularly to anſwer before I proceed; and that is this, that it is more for the Glory of God, that the whole Work of our Amendment, and Reformation, and Salvation, ſhould be left to *Him,* than that any part of it ſhould be claimed by our ſelves; and that upon

upon this Account it ſeems more probable that it all depends upon his irreſiſtible Arm; and more pious and humble for Men paſſively to permit it to do ſo. But all this is founded upon Two Errors; *firſt*, the not judging rightly what is the true Glory of Almighty God; and *ſecondly*, the imagining that to ſuppoſe Man capable of acting together with God in this great Work, is to exclude God from being the Original Fountain of every thing: and therefore, may be fully anſwered by ſome Obſervations, relating to theſe Two Points. And,

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1. THE Glory of God is to be meaſured by his Nature, and Attributes; and by the Declarations of his Word. If we conſider his *Attributes*; we muſt fix nothing upon him but what is perfectly conſiſtent with the united Harmony of them all. He is perfectly wiſe; perfectly juſt; and perfectly holy. Now it is a greater Glory to his Wiſdom, to make Creatures capable of Freedom in their Actions, than to make only Clockwork, and Machines, to be moved by the immediate and conſtant Interpoſition of the Artificer. It is a greater Glory to his Holineſs, (that Attribute by which He is repre-

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ſented as a Lover of Virtue, and Hater of Vice,) to aſſiſt Men in their Endeavours after Perfection; than to force them to be perfect, whether they will or no. Nay, the contrary ſeems utterly inconſiſtent with the Suppoſition of his loving Virtue more than Vice. For if Virtue be not ſomething, in ſome degree, depending upon our ſelves; there is no reaſon why he ſhould love it, as it is in us, more than the contrary. For Juſtice requires that every one ſhould be valued, and rewarded, according to what is in himſelf good, or evil. Now, if Virtue be nothing but the irreſiſtible Operation of God upon us; there can be no Reaſon in the World aſſigned why He ſhould hate and puniſh a wicked Man, and love and reward another: becauſe, as to themſelves, they are exactly alike.

THE only difference here ſuppoſed is this, that God is pleaſed, after an arbitrary manner, to work upon one; and wholy to paſs by the other. If any Parent ſhould heap his Favours upon one Child, and then ſhew the greateſt Fondneſs to him, merely becauſe thoſe Favours have been heaped upon him; and abſolutely refuſe to beſtow the leaſt degree

gree of the ſame upon another of his Children, and yet hate and puniſh him, becauſe he had not what he could not have without his Will: would not all the World condemn ſuch a Parent of the moſt partial Fondneſs, and of the moſt arbitrary Proceeding; and attribute it to nothing but Weakneſs of Underſtanding; or Strength of Paſſion? And yet this is what we are not afraid to lay upon Almighty God, when we repreſent Him as doing all for ſome, with an irreſiſtible Arm; and then loving them for what they have no part in: and, on the other ſide, as paſſing by others, and refuſing them that ſame Strength, without which they cannot move; and yet hating and condemning them for not being what they cannot be, and not doing what they cannot do. If we could not think of this in any Earthly Parent, without calling in queſtion his Wiſdom; or his true Regard to what is praiſe-worthy: how can we fix it upon Almighty God? It is indeed to call in queſtion his Wiſdom; or his Impartiality; or his Love to what is truly lovely; or his Averſion to that only which is truly the Object of it. But if a Father hath an equal Regard to all his Children;

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Children; and is ready to aſſiſt them all in their honeſt Endeavours; to put them in the way of pleaſing him; to encourage them to do it; to deter them from the contrary; and to reward, or puniſh them, according as they have voluntarily choſen to make uſe of, or to abuſe, his favours: This we account Wiſdom, and Equity; and a true Notion of Virtue; and a true Love to what is Praiſeworthy; and a true Abhorrence of what deſerves Hatred and Diſcouragement.

WE cannot help having ſuch Notions of Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Holineſs: and if, whilſt we have ſuch, we can fix any thing upon God contrary to theſe; we certainly rob Him of the Glory of what we conſtantly account Perfections; and of what we ever eſteem to belong to Wiſdom, Equity, and Holineſs. Let any one therefore think, whether it can be a Glory to God, to repreſent Him as acting a Part amongſt his Children, and Creatures, which we ſhould ſeverely blame in any Earthly Parent? *If I be a Father*, ſaith Almighty God, upon a different Occaſion, *where is mine Honour?* It may be ſaid, if God be a Father, and ſo thought by us; where is the Regard to Him, under

under this Notion, when that Conduct is attributed to Him, which would not be ſeen in an earthly Father, without great Deteſtation, and Abhorrence? If we think, therefore, of God, as of a Being veſted with all Perfection of Wiſdom, Equity, and Holineſs; we ſhall find it a greater Glory to ſuch a Being, to ſuppoſe Him aſſiſting his Creatures in the Way to Happineſs; joining his Strength to their Endeavours; and expecting their ſincere Endeavours to be joined to his Strength; than to repreſent Him as doing all irreſiſtibly for them; and then loving them and rewarding them, for what was forced upon them whether they would or no: and, on the other hand, as neglecting many others, who could not ſtir one Step without the ſame irreſiſtible Arm to work for them; and, after this, hating and condemning them for lying in a State, in which they could not but lie, unleſs He himſelf forced them out of it. The one is the Glory of an equitable Diſtributor of Favours, and Frowns; of Rewards, and Puniſhments: the other is the Glory of a Tyrannick and Arbitrary Mind, which raiſeth to it ſelf Favourites out of Humour; and loves and hates entirely at the Influence of Prejudice,

SERM. XIV. Prejudice, and without Regard to any thing, but what is in itſelf baſe and unreaſonable.

AND, as we ſhould not fail to judge thus in the Caſe of any Earthly Parent; ſo we cannot help it in the much higher Caſe now before us: nay, we muſt loſe all Notions of good, and equal, and wiſe; and leave off to ſpeak of God at all, if we can think otherwiſe. If, therefore, we have any Regard to the Glory of God; *the Glory due unto his Name*; the Glory of his real and unalterable Perfections: let us not, under Pretenſe of making Him great and powerfull, deveſt Him of Wiſdom, and Equity; let us not, under Pretenſe of making Him the ſole Actor in the great Affair of Salvation, rob Him of the Glory which is much greater; the Glory of regarding, and loving, and rewarding, his reaſonable Creatures, (not according to mere Will and Power; but) according to what degrees of good, and ſincere, are in them; and according to what depends, in ſome meaſure, upon themſelves. What we call Virtue, if it be neceſſarily produced by an Agent diſtinct from our ſelves, is not Virtue, nor commendable, nor rewardable, in us; nor any more to us, than that

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Vice which is ſuppoſed as neceſſary in another. And if ſo, we cannot be loved, or rewarded, by a wiſe and holy God, for what doth no more deſerve Love in us, than the contrary. But Almighty God is wiſe, and holy, and equal; and certainly loves, and regards Virtue, as a thing Praiſe-worthy in us. From whence it follows that it is not ſo wholy his Work in us, but that He expects Labour from our ſelves; and looks upon it as depending in ſome degree, upon our ſelves: tho' always under the Influences of his good Spirit; which is ever ready to attend upon our ſincere Endeavours. SERM. XIV.

AND thus indeed, is He repreſented in *holy Scripture*; as delighting in the Man that doth his Will, and walks in the Paths of Virtue; and as abhorring the Man who acts a contrary Part: neither of which could he do, were it equally impoſſible to both ſorts to be virtuous; and were He himſelf the ſole Mover, and irreſiſtible Worker, of all that is good. But,

2. THE other Conſideration I mentioned was this, That the *Objection* I am now anſwering, is founded upon the Imagination that the giving to Man any part in his own Amend-

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Amendment, and Salvation, implies in it that it is not owing to Almighty God: which ſeems to derogate from his Glory. Whereas, as I have before obſerved to you, Almighty God is not at all excluded by this Suppoſition. For Man, having no Powers, and being poſſeſſed of no Faculties, but what are originally owing to this great Creator; he can arrive at no Happineſs, but what He muſt acknowledge to be owing to that firſt Original of all his Powers, and all his Faculties.

To ſay, therefore, that Men can bear an active, and a voluntary Part, in their own Reformation, and Happineſs, is not to derogate from God; becauſe it is no more than to ſay that God hath ſo made them, and endow'd them with ſuch Powers, as that they are able to do ſomething for themſelves. It is not to detract from their Obligations to their great Creator, and Redeemer; but it is only to ſhew what He hath made them capable of doing: and ſtill the making of them ſo, is entirely his Work; and all the happy Reſult of it, his Glory. Their Uſe of theſe Faculties is indeed made, in ſome meaſure, their own Work, and voluntary Part; that

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ſo it may make them the *Subjects* of Reward: but the Grant of theſe Faculties is the creating Work of God; aſcribed to him; and a perpetual Fountain of ſuch a Glory as He delights in, when they are uſed well, and as he requires them to be uſed; and this a more *rational Glory*, and a more worthy Honour, than if He had made them only as *Machines*, to be Inſtances of his Power, and Arguments merely of his Greatneſs. And beſides, I am far from contending that, in the preſent Degeneracy of Humane Nature, theſe Faculties can do all. For I maintain the Neceſſity of God's gracious Concurrence. I am only arguing that they can act together with God's holy Spirit; and that our Holineſs depends upon our own Labour, together with the Aſſiſtance of That. SERM. XIV.

THUS much may ſuffice to ſhew the Weakneſs of this *Objection*, which pretends to ſacrifice Virtue it ſelf to the Glory of God; and to prove the Truth of this Propoſition, that it is the trueſt Glory to ſuch a Being as we are taught, by Reaſon and Revelation, to eſteem Almighty God to be, to have made Man capable, in ſome degree, of a voluntary Motion towards Heaven and Happi-

SERM. XIV. Happineſs; and to love and reward him for ſomething which depends upon himſelf, as well as upon the friendly Aſſiſtance of God: which is ſtill made equally neceſſary to his Attainment of *Chriſtian* Perfection.

BUT becauſe the Perverſeneſs of habitual Sinners is ſuch, that they are not only glad to lay hold on ſuch Pretenſes, as I have already examined, to fortify themſelves in Sin, which they love, and embrace, as the Effect of their unavoidable Weakneſs; but to argue from ſome other *Paſſages* of the *Scripture*, relating even to good Men; from which they hope for Comfort, and endeavour to flatter themſelves that their preſent deplorable Condition is no worſe a State of Weakneſs than what ſome in a very ſafe Condition have been in: I ſhall, therefore, before I conclude, take notice of *Two*, or *Three*, of theſe abuſed and perverted Paſſages.

1. THE *firſt* I ſhall mention, is That in *Prov.* xxiv. at the 16th ver. *For a juſt Man falleth ſeven times.* It is almoſt a Shame indeed to mention it: but that ſome have been ſo extremely weak as to lay hold on it, to adminiſter Comfort to themſelves in their falling into Sin. Nay, they generally cite it

it thus, *The juſt Man falleth ſeven times a Day:* whereas there is no ſuch Word as the laſt, either in the *Original*, or in any *Tranſlation.* I need only direct any one of the moſt ordinary Capacity to the Paſſage, as it lies in that *Chapter:* For whoever turns to it will preſently find that the *falling*, there ſpoken of, is *falling* into Trouble, and Affliction, and Misfortune; and not into Sin. For the whole Verſe is thus. *For a juſt Man falleth ſeven times, and riſeth up again: but the Wicked ſhall fall into Miſchief.* The Verſe before is Advice to the Wicked. *Lay not wait, O wicked Man, againſt the Dwelling of the Righteous; ſpoil not his Reſting-place. For a juſt Man falleth ſeven times*, &c. It is deſigned plainly to repreſent to us that God preſerveth the good Man from the Attempts of the Wicked; and that the Wicked often fall into that Miſchief, which they deſign againſt the Righteous. The *Verſes* following do likewiſe go on to ſpeak wholy of Temporal Evils; and of falling into Affliction. The whole Ground, therefore, of this Pretenſe is taken away. For here is nothing ſaid of the wilful Sins of good Men; but of their being

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frequently afflicted; and frequently ſupported in, and raiſed out of, their Troubles.

BUT, ſuppoſing it were ſaid that even good Men are frequently, or ſometimes, ſurprized into Failings: this can be nothing to thoſe wretched Perſons who indulge themſelves in an Habit of ſinning. For whatever Failings a truly ſincere Chriſtian may have been ſurprized into; they always render him much more careful, and more arm'd againſt them, for the Time to come: whereas the Sinner is confirmed and ſettled more and more, in his wicked Courſe, by every Step he takes in the Paths of Sin. Nay, He aggravates the Guilt of his ſinful Courſe, by making thoſe Failings of good Men, which are their Grief, and the Arguments of the greateſt Care and Caution to themſelves, to be the Ground of Encouragement to him, in a careleſs, and ſupine Neglect of *God*'s Laws. But,

2. ANOTHER as weak Pretenſe is founded upon that paſſage in the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*, ch. xiv. at the 15th v. where *Paul* and *Barnabas* ſay to the *Lycaonians*, *We alſo are Men of like Paſſions with your ſelves:* from whence ſome have concluded them-

themſelves to be in as ſafe a Condition as ſome of the beſt of Men; even whilſt their Paſſions and Luſts were in full Power. Whereas, this Paſſage hath no relation to the Diſtinction between *good* and *bad*; *paſſionate*, and *well-temper'd* Men: but between *Men*, and *God*; between Humane *Nature*, and the *Divine*. It was ſpoken to deter the *Lycaonians* from offering Sacrifice to *Paul*, and *Barnabas*, as if they were *Gods*. The Words in the *Greek* ſignify, We are Beings liable to the ſame Imperfections; the ſame Sufferings; and particularly to Death it ſelf; as you are. We are weak, and mortal; even Men, as well as your ſelves: and therefore, do not pay what you account Divine Honour, to us. Then follows immediately, *who preach unto you that you ſhould turn from theſe Vanities unto the living God.* This again ſhews that the *Apoſtles* did not level themſelves with theſe Sinners: for it would have been to no purpoſe to have endeavoured to convert them, if, at the ſame time, they acknowledged themſelves to be in the ſame Condition of *vicious Paſſion*, and *indulged Sin*. SERM. XIV.

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So that, whether we conſider the Words themſelves; they were deſigned to ſignify nothing but that the *Apoſtles* were mortal Men, and not Gods: or the Circumſtances of the Place; they ſhew us that the *Apoſtles* were at the very time preaching to the *Lycaonians* the abſolute Neceſſity of forſaking their Sins. How unjuſt, therefore, is it for a Sinner to lay hold on ſo fooliſh a Miſtake; and to chuſe to fix the greateſt Blot and Abſurdity upon the *Apoſtles* themſelves, rather than become truly good and virtuous.

3. ONE *Paſſage* more I ſhall juſt mention; and that is, St. *Paul*'s calling himſelf, the *chief* of *Sinners*. 1 Tim. i. 15. *Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners; of whom I am chief.* Now, whoever turns to the 13th *Verſe*, will find that he ſpeaks there of himſelf, not in his preſent Condition; but, before his receiving of the Goſpel. For there he deſcribes himſelf, (the *Sinner* on whom Chriſt had Mercy,) as one who was *before a Blaſphemer, and a Perſecutor, and injurious:* not that he was ſuch an one at the time he ſpake this; but before he was a *Chriſtian.* So that this can adminiſter no Comfort, but

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to one who hath left that ſad Condition; and is become what St. *Paul* at that time was: who was to be an Inſtance of God's Readineſs to forgive the greateſt Enemy, upon hearty Amendment; but not whilſt he remains in that State of Enmity. SERM. XVI.

BESIDES, St. *Paul* ſpeaks not this with relation to a ſinful and vicious acting againſt the Dictates of his Conſcience: but ſolely with regard to his having been a Perſecutor, and Blaſphemer, of the Chriſtian Religion. As for other Parts of his Conduct; he often declareth that he was an exact Obſerver of that Law of which he was then a profeſſed Diſciple: and therefore this is not to be interpreted of that which we commonly call *Vice*, and *Immorality*, in profeſs'd *Chriſtians*. But the Influence St. *Paul*'s Example ſhould have upon *Chriſtians*, ſhould all be taken from what he was after he was a *Chriſtian*. And thence let all Sinners learn their Shame. For they will find him deſcribing himſelf, as an Example to all to whom he addreſſed himſelf; and they will ſee Him to have been as great an Inſtance of Labour, Humility, Meekneſs, Charity, Piety, and every Virtue, as ever bleſſed the *Church* of *Chriſt*.

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His State, as he was a *Chriſtian*, is what Chriſtians ſhould regard: and in this, they will find him ſo perfect, that they will have but little Encouragement from hence to flatter themſelves in thoſe Vices which he abhorred; or in that fooliſh Notion of their Weakneſs, of which his Example, as well as Precepts, is the greateſt Confutation poſſible. If Men be Heathens, and Infidels indeed, they may learn from St. *Paul*'s Example, that God will make Allowances for their Prejudices; and accept them, whenever they ſincerely comply with the Offers of his Goſpel: but if they be *Chriſtians*, they can learn nothing from his Example, but a continual Watching, and Care, *leſt they become Caſtaways*; and an Aſſurance, that they have Strength enough to be *Fellow-workers together with God*, in order to all things required for their Happineſs, and Salvation.

BUT how unwilling do we find Men to think themſelves able to bear any Part in what is good? In the Paths of Vice; in the Projects of Iniquity; in the Execution of what is evil; their Feet are ſwift, and their Hands ſtrong; and their Heads able: but

but when God's Will is to be performed; nothing is ſo weak, ſo impotent, ſo unable as they. Thus, if you ask a worldly-minded Man for a Gift of Charity, or true Generoſity; he often pretends Inability, and Incapacity; whilſt he hath enough to lay out upon any Trifle, or uſeleſs piece of Vanity; or a great deal laid up, a Sacrifice to Covetouſneſs, and Uſeleſsneſs. The voluptuous Man hath Power and Spirit to encounter Difficulties without Number; to watch inceſſantly; to labour without Intermiſſion; to deny himſelf in many Inſtances, in order to come to ſome imaginary Pleaſure: but if you ſpeak of Self-denial for the ſake of Religion, or Virtue; preſently the Weakneſs of Human Nature is pleaded, and the Impoſſibility of undergoing the leaſt part of the ſame Labour, for the ſake of the greateſt Good poſſible. If ever they think of Amendment they deſire to wait God's Time; till his irreſiſtible Arm moves them, againſt their Will. As for themſelves; they are dead, and without Life: unleſs it be to offend God, and provoke his Anger. Fooliſh and unwiſe! to think that ſuch Excuſes can ever paſs upon the Searcher of all Hearts! to think that

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SERM. XIV. their own wilful Habits will be an Apology for their continuing in them! No, The more difficult we find it, the more immediately muſt we ſet about the Work: conſidering that the Difficulty hath been created by our own Folly, and Wilfulneſs.

LET us not, therefore, pretend Weakneſs and Inability, in a Caſe which ſhould fire and animate us to do Wonders. Let us pray to God, in Sincerity, for his holy Spirit; and heartily labour, our ſelves, under its Directions, and Influences. Let us not think that a *vicious Inclination* is a better *Excuſe* on *one* ſide, than the Dictate of a good Conſcience is an *Argument* on the *other*. Let us not be ſo ungrateful to that God who is our Maker, as to think he frames and fits us for nothing but Sin; and leaves all that is good entirely out of our Compoſition. Let us not be ſo baſe, and ungrateful to our Redeemer, as to take occaſion, from the Aſſiſtances offered us in the Goſpel, to *continue in Sin*; and ſo blaſphemous, as to neglect to do our Duty, under Pretenſe of conſulting the Glory of God. But let us remember that our acting our Parts well, is his greateſt Glory; and that

that the gracious Aids of his *Spirit* are the greateſt Encouragement to us to work out, together with Him, our own Salvation: Which God grant we may all do, *&c.*

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The true, and falſe, Notions of Repentance, conſidered.

SERMON XV.

ACTS iii. part of the 19th Verſe.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out.

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THE great Concern of all Chriſtians is, ſo to paſs through Things Temporal, that they finally loſe not the Things Eternal: And the moſt important Enquiry in order to this, is that which leads us to the certain Knowledge of thoſe *Terms* upon which God will pardon, and accept us. But though this be a Point of infinitely the greateſt Importance of any that can come within the Thoughts of a Chriſtian: yet there is no Point, in which Chriſtians act a more careleſs, and ſurprizing,

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Part than in this; and none in which they more willingly contribute to their own Deceit, and Ruin. Nor in any thing is this more viſible, than in thoſe falſe Notions which many give themſelves leave to entertain concerning the Nature of that *Repentance*, to which they find the Promiſe of Forgiveneſs to be annexed in the Goſpel. As it is our Duty, therefore, to put a Stop, as much as we are able, to ſuch miſtaken Apprehenſions, as may endanger the Eternal Happineſs of Men; ſo, I ſhall now endeavour it, in this Particular, in purſuance of what I have, in ſome former Diſcourſes, attempted, in order to eſtabliſh in our Minds the true Notion of thoſe *Terms* which are required of us, in order to our final Acceptance with God. And, SERM. XV.

I. I SHALL endeavour to ſhew you the true Nature of that Repentance, which is of force for the Remiſſion of Sins. And,

II. FROM hence I ſhall make appear the great Weakneſs of thoſe miſtaken Notions of it, by which many Chriſtians have been deceived.

I. IN order to ſhew the true Nature of that Repentance which is ſpoken of in the

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New Teſtament, I ſhall premiſe *Two* or *Three* Obſervations, *Viz.*

1. THAT our *bleſſed Lord*, and his *Apoſtles*, preaching to a World of Men, grown up in Heathen Impieties, and arrived at full Age, without ſuch bright Light and Conviction, as the *Goſpel* brought along with it, conſtantly ſpeak of *Repentance*, in their Diſcourſes to them, as the firſt Step towards their Acceptance with God. This We may ſee in the *Goſpels*, and all thro' the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*; that, when Heathens, or wicked Jews, are ſpoken to, and inſtructed what to do, in order to Salvation, the firſt Word generally is; *Repent:* as here, in the *Text*, St. *Peter* calls upon the *Jews* who had hitherto *rejected the Lord of Life*, to *repent*; and that in order to their being *converted*; as it follows. For the firſt Step that a vicious Man can take towards a Change of his Life, is to be truly ſenſible of the Unreaſonableneſs of that Courſe of Sin and Iniquity, in which he hath formerly lived; and to have due Sentiments of his paſt Behaviour: becauſe, without this due inward Senſe of it, He can never heartily conſent to forſake, and amend it; or, in the Expreſſion

preſſion uſed in the *Text*, to be *converted*, or turned, from it. Thus in the *Second Chapter* of the *Acts*, the ſame St. *Peter* exhorts the unbelieving *Jews*, *Repent and be baptized*. *Repentance* is the firſt Step: becauſe, as I have already obſerved, without a Senſe of the Unreaſonableneſs and Wickedneſs of their former State, they could not poſſibly, with Sincerity, think it worth their while to *believe* in *Jeſus Chriſt*; and to be *baptiz'd*, and entered, into his Religion, ſo different from their former Condition. SERM. XV.

AND, this being the firſt Step that could be taken by an unbelieving, or wicked Man; no wonder that this is pointed out as the firſt, in order to Salvation, or Remiſſion of Sins. Upon this firſt *Repentance* of Unbelievers, they were baptized, and by Baptiſm put into a State of Salvation; and a Capacity of being happy upon the Conditions of *Jeſus Chriſt*: and therefore this may well be ſpoken of, as the Road to Salvation, and Happineſs; becauſe without it there could be no entering into the *Chriſtian Diſpenſation*. This then, is that *Condition* of Acceptance, which is chiefly ſpoken of thro' the *Goſpels*, and the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*;

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Apoſtles; which give us an account of what was ſaid to *Unbelievers*, and wicked *Jews*, or *Gentiles*. But,

2. THE next Obſervation I have to make is, that, as ſoon as this firſt *Condition* was complied with, and Men were perſuaded by the *Apoſtle*'s Preaching into a due Senſe of their paſt evil Courſes, and into a thorough Renunciation of them; that, as ſoon as they were, in conſequence of this, entered into the *Chriſtian Religion* by *Baptiſm*, and were profeſſed Members of Chriſt's Body, the Church: that then, I ſay, all the Exhortations of the *Apoſtles*, and all their Perſuaſions, ran perpetually upon *Newneſs of Life*; upon *working out their own Salvation with Fear and Trembling*; upon the Danger of falling back into their former State; and upon the Perfection of Virtue required of them. This is plain from the *Epiſtles*, written by the *Apoſtles* to profeſſed Chriſtians: which are full of the moſt pathetic Exhortations to all Virtue; and of the moſt ſevere Reprehenſions of all Vice; and of the plaineſt Condemnations of Chriſtians, who are wilful Sinners, to the greateſt Degrees of God's Diſpleaſure.

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So that from your Obſervation of what you read in the *Acts* of the *Apoſtles*; and of what you find in their *Epiſtles*; you cannot but make theſe Two Concluſions: That *Repentance* is the Subject of their Sermons, when they are preaching to unbelieving, or wicked, *Jews* and *Gentiles*; in order to perſuade them to leave off their former Behaviour, and come over to the Chriſtian Religion: and that, after they are Chriſtians, they are with the ſame Earneſtneſs preſſing upon them the abſolute, indiſpenſable, Neceſſity of all Holineſs and Virtue; as they were before inculcating the Neceſſity of their renouncing their former State of Infidelity, and Vice. The frequent mention of *Repentance* is made to thoſe who were not already Chriſtians: but to Chriſtians, the Practice of all Virtue, and the poſitive Improvement in all that is good and Praiſeworthy, is vehemently recommended. But,

3. THO' this be ſo in fact; as will appear to any one who will compare the Preaching of the *Apoſtles* to *Unbelievers*, with the *Moral Rules* and Inſtructions given to *Believers*; yet I muſt obſerve that there was place found for *Repentance*, in favour

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of ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians as wilfully ſinned, upon their giving evident Tokens of the Sincerity of it. But then, there was no other Token of it ſuppoſed to be ſincere, but actual Amendment, and Reformation; without which it is evident, from the Tenor of all the *Apoſtles* Declarations, in their *Epiſtles*, that there was no Hope of Acquittance at the laſt Day of Accounts. Thus the ſinful *Corinthian* was reſtored to Peace; not till He was in danger of being *ſwallowed up with over-much ſorrow*, 2 Cor. ii. 7; and after much more Difficulty, and Severity of Diſcipline, than was uſed in admitting the *Repentance* of one who had not before profeſſed himſelf a Chriſtian. If any one who was *called a Brother*, i. e. a Chriſtian, was an habitual Sinner; His Company was to be avoided by other *Chriſtians*, as one whom they were not to own for a Chriſtian, in thoſe Days when it could be done, 1 *Cor.* v. 11. But this was upon Suppoſition of the Perſon's not amending his Life: for it is evident that, upon the Tokens of a ſincere Amendment, He was admitted again to Hopes of Happineſs. *Let him that ſtole ſteal no more*, was the Method

thod which St. *Paul* preſcribed in the Caſe of the Sin of Theft; *Epheſ.* iv. 28. which implies in it that Amendment is the Sum of the *Repentance* of a Chriſtian; and that, upon that Amendment, He is in a ſafe Condition. SERM. XV.

I COULD give more Evidence of this from the firſt Records of Chriſtianity: but this one Argument, is ſufficient; which I have heretofore enlarged upon; *viz.* that the Goſpel would in-vain profeſs to bring Salvation to mortal Men, if every wilful Deviation from the Rules of Virtue were ſo unpardonable, that no future Amendment were ſufficient to entitle the Sinner to the Forgiveneſs of what was paſt. For, as to forgive Sinners without actual Amendment and Reformation, would be to encourage them to continue in Sin: ſo, abſolutely to deny Forgiveneſs to every wilful Sin, tho' ſincerely repented of, and forſaken, would be to drive Men by Deſpair into the ſame State of Sin; and to defeat the Deſigns of the Goſpel. And therefore, we may be ſure that, as nothing but Amendment, and future Holineſs, can entitle a

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Chriſtian to Forgiveneſs of his paſt Sins; ſo theſe moſt certainly will do it.

THUS then the Caſe ſtands. The unbelieving World of *Jews*, and *Gentiles*, were ſuppoſed by the *Apoſtles* to be great and wilful Sinners: and therefore, *Repentance* was the firſt thing ſpoken of, to them. Believers, or Chriſtians, entered into, and ſolemnly engaged in, the *holieſt* of all Inſtitutions, were not ſuppoſed by them to be *Wilful Sinners*; or to continue in thoſe Sins which they had renounced at *Baptiſm*: as the *Apoſtle* himſelf argues, *Rom.* vi. And therefore little mention is made to them expreſly of *Repentance*; but much of living worthy of their Profeſſion, and of fulfilling all the Laws of Morality, and Virtue, in the higheſt degree poſſible. But if any of them were overcome by Sin, and tempted to tranſgreſs the Rules of their Inſtitution; Amendment was required and accepted, for the ſake of that *Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous.*

WHAT, therefore, remains for us, who are profeſſed Chriſtians, to do, in this Matter? Certainly, We are not to look merely to

to that which was recommended to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, as the firſt Step only towards Happineſs: but to thoſe Injunctions laid upon ſuch as became profeſſed Chriſtians; and to the Methods preſcribed to Them. And then, we can never miſtake in this great and important Affair: becauſe we can never think our ſelves at liberty to diſpenſe with that Holineſs, and Perfection of Virtue, which is conſtantly preſs'd upon Chriſtians. If therefore, we take in the whole of this Matter; and conſider *Repentance*, with relation to profeſſed Chriſtians, who have been Sinners; as ſomething which will entitle them to God's Favour; it muſt certainly equally ſuppoſe and imply in it theſe following Parts. SERM. XV.

1. AN hearty Sorrow, and deep Concern, for all paſt Tranſgreſſions of the Laws of God.

2. AN unfeigned Diſpoſition of Mind, oppoſite to that of Sin and Wickedneſs, and tending to fulfil his Will. And,

3. AN actual avoiding, or reſiſting, thoſe Temptations, by which they have been formerly over-powered; and an actual Practice of the contrary Virtues.

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1. WITH reſpect to the *firſt* of theſe; all are willing enough to admit that *Repentance* muſt ſuppoſe and imply it; becauſe a little Sorrow, and a ſhort-liv'd Paſſion, will coſt them little Pains, and Trouble. The loweſt Notion of *Repentance* takes in that of being ſorrowful; and having a tender Diſpoſition of Mind, for the preſent, whilſt that Sorrow laſts. About this, therefore, there needs no Debate; becauſe this is the part of *Repentance* which the weak ſide of Humane Nature is the moſt pleaſed with. But,

2. THERE muſt be a Change of Diſpoſition within. The Word uſed in the *New Teſtament* ſignifieth an Alteration of the Purpoſe, and Frame, within.

ST. *Paul* reckons not Sorrow a part of Repentance; but Repentance an Effect of Sorrow: 2 *Cor.* vii. 10. *For godly Sorrow*, (and that is the Sorrow, we are now ſpeaking of) *worketh Repentance to Salvation, not to be repented of.* It worketh ſuch a Diſpoſition of Mind, as manifeſtly ſhews what it is that produceth it. If any Perſon be concerned, and ſorrowful at any thing that hath paſs'd him; it never fails to work

work in Him a Diſpoſition leading to the contrary for the Time to come. And, if you conſult the Movements of your own Minds, you muſt find that a true Concern within, at any paſt part of your Conduct, is never without a firm Thought, and Diſpoſition, contrary to that which hath cauſed that Regret, and Concern, in you. If this be ſo, in all other Caſes; we may depend upon it, it is the ſame in this now before us. If we be truly ſorrowful, and heartily concerned, that we have offended God, and ſinned againſt his Laws; this will certainly be accompanied with as ſincere, and as hearty, a Diſpoſition to pleaſe Him, and obey his whole Will for the Time to come. And it cannot be ſuppoſed to be a ſincere Sorrow without this. Nor is this all: for,

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3. THIS Sorrow, and this Change of Mind, if they be ſincere, muſt unavoidably produce a Courſe of Behaviour contrary to that which cauſed this Sorrow, and this Diſpoſition: and if this be not the Effect of them, they are of no Account; unleſs it be to increaſe the Condemnation of thoſe who pretend to them. Thus St. *Paul*, in

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the forecited *Seventh Chapter* of his *Second Epiſtle* to the *Corinthians*, *Verſe* 10, declareth that *godly Sorrow worketh Repentance to Salvation, a Repentance not to be repented of:* perhaps the Words more properly ſignify, ſuch a Repentance, as implies in it no occaſion for *Repentance* afterwards; ſuch a *Repentance* as implies in it a Conduct and Behaviour, of which there is no reaſon to repent. And He goes on, in the next Verſe, to prove their Sorrow for having offended to be ſincere, and genuine; not from their Words, but from their Actions and Behaviour: by which only it was that He judged that they *ſorrowed after a godly ſort.*

BUT what need I appeal to Him? We our ſelves are Judges of this Matter, if we be not fooliſhly partial to our ſelves, by our intimate Acquaintance with the Springs, and Frame, of Human Nature. There are none of us all, who, in the Caſe of other Perſons, do not conſtantly judge of the Bent of their inward Thoughts, and the Sincerity of their outward Profeſſions, by their Actions and Behaviour; and by theſe only. In any Matters that concern our

our ſelves, we never take the Profeſſions of others concerning their inward Diſpoſitions towards us, to be the true Repreſentations of them, unleſs we ſee the Fruits, and Effects, which, in ſuch Caſes, we cannot help judging, would follow upon ſuch Diſpoſitions of Mind. How then can we poſſibly think our ſelves ſincere in our *Sorrow*, and inward *Repentance* towards God; whilſt we ſee them void of thoſe good Effects, by which only they are as certainly known amongſt Men themſelves, as a good Tree is known by the Fruit it produceth? SERM. XV.

AND if we proceed in our Enquiries, and examine farther into the Conſtitution of our own Natures; we ſhall find that all the Powers and Faculties of our Minds were given us for no other Purpoſe, but to regulate our Behaviour, and Conduct; and that they are all of no account, but as tending, and employed, that way. We never think any Perſons arrived at the uſe of their inward Faculties, till they are fit to act, and ſhew themſelves in the World: and we never judge any to be prudent, or imprudent; mad, or ſober within; but by their

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outward Conduct and Demeanor. What ſignify all our inward Powers? Of what Importance is it, to judge and determine, within our own Minds; to reflect and cenſure our own Actions; unleſs it be in order to have an Influence upon them? As ſure, therefore, as it is, that any Perſon hath a Power within, to judge which way of Action is beſt: ſo ſure is it, that this Power could be given for nothing, but to determine his Actions the beſt Way. As ſure as it is that we have, all of us, a Conſcience, or Reaſon, to direct us before we act; and to applaud, or condemn us afterwards: ſo ſure is it, that this hath ſolely a reſpect to our Actions, and Behaviour. If, therefore, we cannot but reflect with Sorrow, and Concern, upon ſome part of our Behaviour; which we find contradictory to the Laws of Reaſon, and of God: it is certain that this very Power of Reflexion was deſigned to influence our Behaviour for the Time to come. For, to be ſorry for any part of our Behaviour, implies in it that it was unbecoming, or ſinful; and to account it unbecoming, or ſinful, implies in it that it ought never to be

be practiſed again: and ſo it cannot be, but that this inward Affection muſt be deſigned for the Alteration of what is amiſs in us. SERM. XV.

AND if to this we add a Conſideration, or *Two* upon the Nature of *Almighty God*; we ſhall find it yet more certain, For, his Nature being all Perfection; there cannot be an higher Indignity offered to Him, than to ſuppoſe that our Sorrow, or Grief, which is, in the degree of it, Miſery it ſelf, is for its own ſake acceptable to Him. No, If we think rightly of Him; we cannot but think that bare Sorrow is what He rather diſlikes, than likes: but that it is that *godly Sorrow* only, which worketh Amendment, and Alteration, that is approved of by Him. Can our Grief, or Sorrow, advantage Him? Or, can any thing of ours affect Him? No. But it is only, as our Grief may advantage our ſelves; and as our Sorrow may lead us to avoid all Occaſions of ſuch Sorrow for the Time to come; that it can be well-pleaſing in his Eyes.

WILL you then judge from the Nature of Man? You ſee, All the inward Movements of his Mind are calculated for nothing

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nothing but to influence and govern his Behaviour: and ſo, a *Sorrow* without an Effect of it upon his Life, muſt be as inſignificant, in his own Account, as the Faculty of Reaſoning it ſelf, ſeparated from all Effect upon his Conduct, and Behaviour. Or, will you judge of this Matter from the Nature of God Almighty? He cannot take any Pleaſure in our Sorrow; but as it tends to our real Joy and Happineſs. It can be of no account in his Eyes; but as it makes us better, and wiſer, for the future.

OR laſtly, will you judge of it from the great Deſign of Chriſtianity? How unworthy muſt you think it of God, to ſend his Son into the World, to live, and dye, in order to lead Men to a bare, pretended, Sorrow and Grief for their Sins? Is it not the doing his Father's Will, which He preſſeth upon his Diſciples? Is it not declared, that the *Grace of God appeared to Men in the Goſpel, to teach them to deny Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts; and to live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly, in this World?* And is it not to contradict all this, in the moſt flagrant manner, to imagine

imagine that the End of Chriſt's coming could be, to lead Men only to a little vain empty Sorrow? That is, to lead Men to what doth, in its own nature, aggravate their Guilt, if they ſtop at it, without proceeding any farther. Aggravate their Guilt, I ſay: for when we are ſorrowful, on account of our Sins; this Sorrow ſuppoſeth in it that we ought not to commit them; and that there is a foul Evil, and Guilt in them: and this tacit Acknowledgment that their Nature is foul, and evil, and makes us guilty before God, cannot but help to condemn us for returning to what we our ſelves think ſo Blame-worthy. So that when we have Opportunity to do better, and do not; but return again to the ſame Sins that we think deſerve, and call for, our Sorrow; we are ſelf-condemned. The Sorrow, by which we hope to cover them, muſt help to make them the more meritorious of Puniſhment; as it implies in it Self-condemnation, and an Acknowledgment of Guilt. But when it leads to Amendment, and a gradual Increaſe in Virtue; then only is it the Parent of good Fruit, lovely in the Eyes of God, and pleaſing

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ſing in the Reflexion of the Man himſelf. How plain, therefore, is it, if we will but conſider Things, as they truly are, in their Nature, and Conſequences, that the Repentance of Chriſtians, who have been Sinners, neceſſarily implies in it, an actual forſaking of their Sins, and an actual Progreſs in all Virtue, and Godlineſs of living.

II. HAVING thus given as true, and as plain, an Account, as I could, of the *Repentance* which alone can avail any profeſſed Chriſtians; I ſhall now only make *Two* or *Three* ſhort *Inferences* from what I have laid down, with reſpect to thoſe *miſtaken Notions*, by which many Chriſtians deceive themſelves in this Affair. And,

1. FROM what hath been ſaid we ſee the Vanity, and Miſery, of thoſe who place their Hopes of Acceptance with God, upon the Sorrow, and Grief, which they ſometimes conceive for their Sins; and call by the Name of *Repentance*, becauſe, in our Language, when we are ſorry for any paſt part of our Conduct, we are ſaid to repent of it. If a Man, propoſing to Himſelf

Himſelf to travel to a Place at ſome diſ- SERM. XV.
tance from his preſent Station, ſhould conclude himſelf to be arrived at it, when He had ſet but one Step out of his own Home; and there make a full Stop, contented, and ſatisfied that this would be ſufficient: would you not think ſuch a Perſon diſtempered in his Brain? Why, juſt thus it is in the Caſe we are conſidering. We pretend to be travelling towards Happineſs: and Repentance, in all its parts, is the Road to this Happineſs. The *firſt* Step, in this Road, is *Sorrow* for our Sins. He that ſtops at this Sorrow, therefore, and reſts himſelf contented with it, ſtops at the firſt Step in his Journey: and how likely He is to arrive at his Journey's End, you may eaſily judge.

2. THUS again, if the ſecond Step be a good Diſpoſition of Mind to go forwards; He that ſtops, without putting in Execution this Diſpoſition, is ſtill as unlikely to arrive at the End propoſed. This is another *Miſtake* of Men in this Affair, that a preſent good *Diſpoſition*, and *Reſolution* of Mind, is ſufficient for their Purpoſe. But certainly, it is not going one Step, or

two

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two Steps, that will bring us to the End of our Spiritual Journey; but the proceeding as far as Time, and Strength, give leave.

3. FROM what hath been ſaid, we are led not to place any Hopes in what we call a *Death-Bed Repentance:* For this *Repentance*, extorted from us by the Proſpect of Death, can be only a Sorrow for Sin; perhaps rendred more paſſionate by our preſent Fears. And this being only Sorrow, and Compunction, and perhaps a good Reſolution; it is plain that ſtill theſe are only the firſt Steps in the *Repentance* of a Sinner; and not complete *Repentance*, in all its parts. I confeſs theſe are not ill Signs: but it ought plainly to be declared that Sorrow, and good Words, are not the End of the *Goſpel Inſtitution*; but an holy Life and Converſation. Indeed, where a Perſon hath had no Calls to Repentance and Amendment before; but been inevitably blinded by unhappy Circumſtances of Education, and hardly known what the *Goſpel* pretends to: if ſuch a Perſon be awakened by his Danger into ſerious Enquiries, and an hearty Conviction

viction of the Truth of the Goſpel; and a great Deteſtation of his former Courſes; one might reaſonably hope good Things. But, in the Caſe of moſt profeſſed Chriſtians, who are called, day after day, to Amendment; and have all the Arguments imaginable repreſented to them; and yet, day after day, ſhut their Ears; ſpend all that Time and Health, which God allows them, in Vice and Iniquity; and then at laſt are ſorry for this, when God thinks fit to try them no longer: In ſuch Caſe, I ſay, all that can be ſaid is, that they are ſorrowful for their Sins; and that if that Sorrow be ſincere, they are got one Step towards Happineſs. But to give greater Hopes; or to ſay that they are the Chriſtians whom God hath declared, He will accept, in his Goſpel, is to render vain all the Threatnings of his Son; to place the Sinner and the Saint upon equal Terms; to put all upon a Man's having a little longer Sickneſs than his Neighbour; and to undo the great Deſign of reforming Men's Lives, the only End worthy of the Son of God's Incarnation.

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THE Reſult of the whole, is this. Since *Almighty God* hath plainly declared, in his Goſpel, what it is He expects of thoſe who have been Sinners; I need not tell you, how great a Weakneſs, and how extreme a Folly, it is, to have recourſe to vain, and flattering Hopes of our own. Since we are Chriſtians, and have a Goſpel open to us, to have recourſe to, upon this Occaſion; it is the greateſt Weakneſs imaginable to conſult our own Paſſions and our own Luſts, what it is fit for us to hope for, at the Hands of God. And yet, I am perſuaded, this is the Caſe. Were not Men inwardly captivated to ſome Vice; Covetouſneſs, or Ambition, or Senſuality; there would not be any thing, in the nature of Things, more evident to themſelves, than that *Almighty God* cannot be ſuppoſed to accept any Thing at our Hands, without a ſincere Amendment of what we know, and acknowledge, to be amiſs in our ſelves. And yet, ſuch is the Effect of our own evil Habits, and the Prevalence of our beloved Vices; that we firſt deſire, and at laſt come really to hope, to be accepted for ſome ſuperficial Circumſtance,

ſtance, without a real Reformation of our Lives. SERM. XV.

BUT how long will Men thus deceive themſelves, in a Caſe in which all Deceit is the Ruine of Soul and Body for ever; and in which they can impoſe upon none but themſelves? *Behold, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to do juſtly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* This was plain under the Law. How much more plain under the Goſpel? As we are *Chriſtians*, we are not ſo much as ſuppoſed to be Sinners. But, if we have tranſgreſſed againſt the plaineſt Light; God is ſo merciful as to allow a Place for Reconciliation to his Favour, upon our Amendment. Is this ſo hard a Condition? Is this ſo great an Injury to us, that we ſhould turn againſt it, and abuſe the *Goſpel* to our own Deſtruction? *Shall the Goodneſs, and Long-ſuffering of God*, inſtead of *leading us to* true *Repentance*, only lead us to a falſe Image of it; and *to treaſure up Wrath to our ſelves againſt the Day of Wrath? Shall we continue in Sin*; and pretend that Sorrow for it is ſufficient? *God forbid!*

SERM. XV. *How shall we*, Christians, *who*, by our Profession, *are dead to Sin, live any longer therein?* Let not such an Use be made of our great Lord's indulgent Kindness to us in the Gospel: but let all who know what *Repentance* is, and what it implies in it, live worthy of that *Repentance*, by which they hope for Salvation; and of that *Vocation wherewith they are called.*

IN a word: If you will have *your Sins blotted out*; you must *repent, and be converted*, in the Words of the *Text:* that is, actually turned from them. If you have been wilful, habitual Sinners; and think of being saved by *Repentance*; here is the Line marked out. The *first* Step is *Sorrow* for your Sins: but it is but the *first*. The *second* is a Disposition to amend your Lives. But there is no stopping here. You cannot think this Sorrow, and this Disposition, sincere, unless they shew themselves in good Effects. There must be an actual Amendment; an actual entring upon, and Progress in, a virtuous and holy Life; whilst God gives Opportunity. Without this, there is not the least Security of Happiness:

pineſs: and, if you truſt to any other Methods, you rely *upon other* Terms than what are propoſed in the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. SERM. XV.

The Example of the Thief upon the Croſs, conſidered.

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LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

And He ſaid unto Jeſus, Lord, Remember me when Thou comeſt into thy Kingdom.

And Jeſus ſaid unto Him, Verily, I ſay unto thee, To day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.

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THESE Words contain in them an Account of the happy Ending of the Life of *one* of thoſe *Malefactors*, who were crucified with our bleſſed Lord. For, tho' we read, in *Two* other of the *Evangeliſts*, that the *Thieves*

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Thieves which were crucified with Him, reviled Him; yet, that we are not neceſſarily to underſtand this of *both* the *Malefactors*, is evident from the like Form of Speech uſed by the ſame Writers, concerning any Matter, the minute Circumſtances of which they do not undertake exactly to relate. Thus, in the ſame *Goſpels*, *that* is ſometimes ſaid to be ſpoken by the *Diſciples*, to *Jeſus*, which was ſpoken by *one* of them only: becauſe it was not thought neceſſary to be more particular. And the *Plural Number* is often thus uſed for the *Singular*, either, when the Story related is ſo known, as that no Miſtake can proceed from thence; or, when the Matter ſpoken of, is of that nature as not to admit a literal Interpretation without a groſs Abſurdity; or, when the *Hiſtorian*, as I have ſaid, doth not undertake to relate every particular Circumſtance of a Story, eſpecially of one generally and univerſally known at the Time of his writing. On theſe Accounts, this Way and Figure of ſpeaking hath been allowed and practiſed.

BUT St. *Luke*, deſigning, in this part of his Hiſtory, to be more particular, hath

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tranſmitted it down to us that what the other Evangeliſts record concerning the *Malefactors*, is to be underſtood only of *one* of them; and that the *other* was of a much better Diſpoſition; that He reproved his Fellow-Sufferer for his rude and unjuſt reviling; and laid hold on that Opportunity, to confeſs a great Degree of Faith in a crucified Saviour.

THE favourable Reception which this penitent Believer met with, in his laſt Moments; and the comfortable Anſwer which He received from our Lord, ſeems to have had an Effect, quite contrary to what our Lord intended, and wiſhed, upon many Chriſtians of later Ages. And, therefore, this part of the *Evangelical Hiſtory* deſerveth our particular Conſideration: that We may judge truly what is to be concluded from it; and avoid any Miſtakes that may prove fatal to our Eternal Intereſt. And, after having, in my laſt Diſcourſe, laid down the true Notion of *Repentance*; I cannot do any thing better than to endeavour to obviate, or refute, the common Error, received and embraced by too many, *viz.* that the Acceptance of this Malefactor is

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an Encouragement to any Chriſtians to place their Hopes of Salvation, upon a *Death-bed Sorrow*, which they miſ-call by the Name of Repentance. In order to this End, SERM. XVI.

I. I SHALL endeavour briefly to give a true and juſt Account of the Caſe of this *Malefactor*, who was thus mercifully received by our Saviour, in his laſt Moments.

II. I DESIGN to ſhew that this was not an extraordinary Act of Favour, out of the General Rule; nor any thing depending on the ſecret Will and Intention of Almighty God: but perfectly agreeable to the profeſſed and declared Tenour of the Goſpel-Covenant; and what any Perſon, in the ſame Circumſtances, may claim, upon the expreſs *Terms* of the *Goſpel*.

III. IN order the more effectually to prevent all Miſtake, I ſhall point out to you, and deſcribe, the Perſons who are in the ſame Circumſtances; and may be as certain of Favour as this *believing Malefactor*. And,

IV. I SHALL endeavour plainly to ſhew the extreme Unreaſonableneſs, and great

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Danger, of the common Miſtakes about this Inſtance of God's Mercy; and the Vanity of thoſe Pretenſes which are built by ſome Men, upon this Example.

I. I SHALL endeavour briefly to give you a true and juſt Account of the Caſe of this *Malefactor*, who was ſo graciouſly received by our bleſſed Saviour, in his laſt Moments.

AND here, there is no reaſon to doubt but that He was a Perſon, who had never enjoyed, before this, a fair opportunity of hearing a juſt Account of our bleſſed Lord, and his Actions, and Pretenſions: it being much more likely that a Perſon of his ſort of Life ſhould firſt hear and conſider, the Character, and Works, and Behaviour of our Lord, during his Impriſonment, than at any time before, whilſt He was following his wicked Trade of Robbery. It is manifeſt from his own Words, as well to his Fellow-Sufferer, as to our Lord himſelf, that He had gotten ſome Knowledge, both of our Lord's Perſonal Character; and of his profeſſing himſelf a King. Now, the Way of Life which he followed, before his Impriſonment, engaged him to keep as much

much out of the Cities and Places of ordinary Converſation; as much out of the Eyes and Obſervation of the World, as He could poſſibly do; and conſequently muſt neceſſarily be ſuppoſed to have hindred him of all fair Opportunities of knowing the Truth concerning our bleſſed Lord. But, juſt before his Crucifixion, He could not well avoid hearing the Rumours ſpread about concerning Him, and learning the true Character, and Pretenſions of our Lord. And He ſeems to have weighed all that He heard, before his Crucifixion, ſo well, as to bring with Him to his Croſs, a Reſolution to profeſs himſelf his Diſciple; and a ſincere Diſpoſition to ſhew himſelf ſuch, in all reſpects poſſible, in that ſmall Remainder of his Time. SERM. XVI.

FROM ſuch a Reſolution as this, ſuch a Perſon as He might well have been removed by the Behaviour of his Fellow-Sufferer; and by that Current of Affronts, which at that time ran ſo violently againſt our Lord, now ſeemingly deſtitute of all Help from *God*, and condemned and outraged, as an Impoſtor, by *Men*. Or, at leaſt, He might have been led to have contented

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tented himſelf, with entreating our Lord, tho' ſomewhat more ſeriouſly than others, *to come down from the Croſs*, and to *ſave himſelf*, and his Fellow-Sufferers. But He appears to have underſtood a great deal, in a very little Time, concerning the true Nature of Chriſt's Kingdom: and ſo, acknowledging the Heinouſneſs of his own Sins, and the Juſtice of God in his Puniſhment of them; all that He deſires of our Lord, is, that He would remember Him, when He ſhould come into his Kingdom.

THIS Malefactor, therefore, you ſee, cannot be ſuppoſed, in the former Courſe of his Life, when his evil Deſigns kept him out of the City, and out of Society, to have had any Opportunity of enquiring, or hearing, concerning our bleſſed Lord. But, after his Impriſonment, it is very poſſible, and very probable, that He came to a Knowledge of our Saviour, and of his Offers to Mankind. It is certain, from the expreſs Words of the *Evangeliſt*, that, on his Croſs, He gave Teſtimony to the unſpotted Character of our Lord; and Proof of his believing the Truth of his Preten-

ſions.

ſions. And laying theſe Things together, his Words to our Saviour may reaſonably be ſuppoſed to imply in them as much, as if he had ſaid thus. " I believe that thou " art truly the Meſſiah, and Saviour of " the World; as thou profeſſeſt thy ſelf " to be: And, notwithſtanding this thy " ignominious Death upon the Croſs, " that Thou haſt a glorious and happy " Kingdom to enter upon; though not " of this World. I take this Opportunity " of profeſſing my ſelf thy Diſciple: which " is the firſt I have enjoyed. This I do, " amidſt the Reproaches of thy Enemies, " and the Inſults of my Fellow-Sufferer. " And, therefore, I beg that I may have " the Benefit of this my Profeſſion; and " may be accepted by Thee, as thou haſt " promiſed to accept all ſuch as do ſin- " cerely believe in Thee, and to acquit " them from the Guilt of all their former " Sins for the ſake of this Belief." This, I ſay, may moſt reaſonably be ſuppoſed to be implied in the Words of this *Malefactor* to our Lord: it being certain from the *Hiſtory* that He had enquired both after the *Character*, and after the *Propoſals*, of our

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our Lord: and found the *former* to be unſpotted; and the *latter* to be Offers of Mercy, and Happineſs, in his Kingdom, to his Diſciples.

IT appears, therefore, that He was one, who was called to the Knowledge of *Jeſus Chriſt*, in the laſt Hours, and had no Opportunity of profeſſing his Belief in Him, but in the laſt Minutes, of his Life; when the *Night* of Death was juſt coming upon Him, in which *no Man can Work:* one, who believed, as ſoon as He poſſibly could hear a true Account of our Lord; and couragiouſly profeſſed his Belief, as ſoon as He had Opportunity to do it; and this at a time when all about him were reviling Him. In ſhort, He did whatever it was in his Power to do, during that Space of Time, which He had left, after He was called to the Knowledge of the Goſpel: and therefore, was accepted to Favour by our bleſſed Lord; and a Promiſe was made Him, that he ſhould immediately upon his Death, be in an happy Place with Him. And here, you will eaſily obſerve that this gracious Acceptance of him was not merely, or chiefly, on the account of his Sorrow

row for his paſt Sins; but for the ſake of his believing in *Jeſus Chriſt*, as ſoon as he could; and of his taking this firſt Opportunity of profeſſing himſelf his Diſciple; that is, for the ſake of his doing all he could to manifeſt the Sincerity of his Faith, from the Time of his believing, to the End of his Life. And this leads me to the *ſecond* thing which I undertook to ſhew; *viz.* SERM. XVI.

II. THAT this was not an extraordinary Act of Favour, out of the general Rule; nor any thing depending upon the ſecret Will, or unrevealed Pleaſure, of *Almighty God:* but perfectly agreeable to the profeſſed, and declared, Tenour of the Goſpel; and what any Perſon, in the ſame Circumſtances, may claim, upon the Promiſes of God, ſufficiently promulgated in the Goſpel. This I would willingly make as plain as poſſible, becauſe this Inſtance of the Thief on the Croſs hath been generally interpreted as an Inſtance of Almighty God's profeſſed Acceptance of the Sorrow of a Sinner at his Death, inſtead of the Practice of Holineſs, and Virtue, during his Life: and, under this Notion, hath

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hath been ſo recommended to the guilty Conſciences of the moſt habitual Sinners, as to give them as ſtrong an Aſſurance of God's Favour, on their Death-beds, as the beſt of Chriſtians can in reaſon poſſeſs; and ſo applied to themſelves, by wilful Sinners, in the Time of their Health, as to encourage them to place all their Hopes in the bitter Sorrow of their laſt Moments, inſtead of rectifying the Diſorders, and Wickedneſs, of their Lives. But that this all proceeds from a miſtaken Notion of this Matter, will appear to you, by proving, as I deſign under this *ſecond* Head, theſe Two Particulars; *viz.*

1. THAT it is highly abſurd to imagine that Almighty God ſhould, by any ſuch publick Inſtance as this, profeſs to the World that He doth, on any account, or in Mercy to any Perſon, depart from thoſe Meaſures which He hath, as publickly, fixed, and promulgated. And,

2. THAT this Inſtance, as I have before repreſented it, is perfectly agreeable to the *Terms* of the *Goſpel*, offered equally to all who hear of it; and plainly

ly laid down by Chriſt, and his Apoſtles. SERM. XVI.

1. I SAY, it is highly abſurd to imagine that Almighty God ſhould, by any ſuch publick Inſtance, as this of the Thief on the Croſs, profeſs to the World that He doth, on any Account, or in Mercy to any Perſon, depart from thoſe Meaſures, which he hath, as publickly, fixed and promulgated.

WHETHER any Being be obliged, in the nature of the thing, to execute his Threatnings in their utmoſt Rigour, as he is to perform his Promiſes to the utmoſt; is another Queſtion. Nay, whether it may not be actually ſo, in fact, at laſt, that Almighty God will remit of that Puniſhment he hath threatned; and not execute the utmoſt of that Wrath which He has declared by his *Son* againſt harden'd impenitent Sinners, is a Point wholy diſtinct from that before us. I muſt own that the affirmative ſide of this Queſtion ſeems to derogate from the Sincerity of the Divine Revelation; and not well to conſiſt with the Nature of the higheſt Simplicity: it being a much worthier Supposition

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poſition concerning Almighty God, that he ſhould declare the exact Truth of the Matter, and leave it to work upon the Minds of Men as far as it could; than that he ſhould declare what will never come to paſs, and ſo endeavour to work upon them by a falſe Perſuaſion, which hath nothing in Nature to anſwer it. But I ſay that it is not ſo abſurd to maintain that ſo it may poſſibly, or probably, be found at laſt; as to ſay that Almighty God hath declared, by any public Inſtance, that he doth, in the Caſe of ſome of the moſt notorious Sinners, depart from the Meaſures which he hath openly declared he will ſtand to.

To come to the Caſe before us; Almighty God declareth, as plainly as Words can declare any thing, that *without Holineſs no Man ſhall ſee the Lord:* that his *Wrath ſhall be upon all the Workers of Iniquity*; eſpecially upon ſuch as profeſs his Goſpel, and yet live in an open Violation of the Laws of it, and an open Neglect of theſe Declarations in it. And yet, this Inſtance, of the Thief on the Croſs, hath been ſometimes ſo interpreted,

preted, as to make Almighty God declare by it to the World, that he will accept of the Death-bed Sorrow of a Sinner; though he hath had ſufficient Warning through his Life; though he hath been a profeſſed Chriſtian, and hath had the faireſt Opportunities of knowing the true *Terms* of *Chriſtian Juſtification.* Now this, I ſay, it is abſurd to imagine concerning Almighty God: becauſe this is publickly to deſtroy the Effect, and Deſign, of his other Declarations; and to give as public an Encouragement as poſſible, to Men, to continue in their Sins. SERM. XVI.

FOR when once a Man hath entertained this Notion, that the Caſe of this *Malefactor* is thus to be interpreted; how eaſy is the Paſſage of his Thoughts from this, to the Imagination that his own Sorrow on his Death-bed ſhall, after the ſame manner, be accepted, inſtead of a religious and virtuous Life? For, why ſhould he not think ſo? Or, what ſhould hinder? Almighty God muſt not be ſuppoſed an arbitrary Being; a Power acting by Humour, and not guided by juſt and equita-

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ble Maxims: but equal in his Regards to all, in Circumſtances exactly equal. And if ſo, his Proceedings, upon thoſe Maxims, muſt be the ſame with all in the ſame Condition. He hath no reſpect to the Perſons of Men: nor can there be any Reaſon in the World aſſigned, why he ſhould deal, in the Diſtribution of his Eternal Rewards or Puniſhments, more favourably with one, than with another, who is not under the Circumſtances of greater Guilt, at his Departure out of this State. And, therefore, if he hath ſhewn ſuch Favour to one of the vileſt of Sinners, on account of a pungent Sorrow, at the Hour of Death, contrary to the ſeeming Tendency of all his Declarations; ſo will he likewiſe to me, may the vileſt of Men ſtill ſay. And what can be the Conſequence of this, but an impenitent Life, and profligate Manners, in the Time of Health?

AND thus far, indeed, I agree with ſuch Perſons, that, whatever the Caſe of this *Malefactor* was; all who are exactly in the ſame, or a like, Caſe, may reaſonably expect, and will certainly experience, the

the ſame Favour which he did. But the Suppoſition, that Chriſtians, who have Repentance and Amendment, day after day, inculcated upon them; who ſtand out againſt all Calls to Reformation; and rely at laſt upon the Sorrow of a ſick Bed, are in the ſame Caſe with this *Malefactor*; or that he, conſidered as in the ſame Caſe with them, is declared in the *New Teſtament*, to have found Favour with God, and to have been entituled to the Happineſs of Heaven: This Suppoſition, I ſay, will be ever incredible to us, till We can come to ſuppoſe Almighty God declaring againſt his own plaineſt Declarations; and ruining his own Deſign of the World's Reformation; or elſe acting after an arbitrary and humourſome manner; accepting of one Man to Eternal Life, and condemning another to Eternal Death, who is, as to himſelf, in the ſame Circumſtances; and hath been led, by this Example, to expect the ſame Acceptance. But who can ſuppoſe this of the God of Mercy, Truth, and Equity? Or, of that God who hath revealed his Wrath againſt all the Workers of Iniquity? But,

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2. As theſe Abſurdities ſhould affrighten us from fixing ſuch a Procedure upon Almighty God; and make us rather willing to ſuppoſe our ſelves wholy miſtaken in our Interpretation of this Dealing of his with the Thief on the Croſs, than to ſuppoſe any ſuch Inconſiſtencies in his Ways: ſo, I muſt obſerve that there is another very good Account to be given of this Matter, perfectly agreeable to the Tenour of the Goſpel, as the *Terms* of it were plainly preached by our Lord and his Apoſtles; and vaſtly diſtant from any ſuch Interpretation, as that which I have now been mentioning.

IN order to make this evident, I muſt obſerve to you that it is the declared Tenor of the Goſpel, that God would juſtify all who ſincerely comply with the Offers of it, and heartily profeſs Faith in *Jeſus Chriſt*; that all, I ſay, who do thus, upon good Motives, ſhall be releaſed from the Guilt of their former Sins, and accepted by God, and dealt with as juſt Perſons, for this very believing ſincerely in his Son Jeſus Chriſt: and this, whether they live a ſhort, or a long, Time after their firſt Belief and Profeſſion;

feſſion; provided they ſhew the Reality of their Faith in that Time, and do not relapſe into a Courſe of Infidelity, or Wickedneſs. Thus, we find, our Lord, in the Goſpels, receiving to his Favour, all who embrace his Offers; and accepting them, upon their firſt Acceptance of his Religion, and his Terms. And we find, more evidently, the *Apoſtles* inſtructed by the Holy Ghoſt to preach the Doctrine of Acceptance, and Remiſſion of all their former Sins, to all who ſhould lay hold on the Opportunity offered them, and embrace the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt, and enter themſelves into his Service. Upon this *Faith*, and Profeſſion of it, Proſelytes were baptized; and they were baptized for the Remiſſion of their Sins; and Juſtification before God was openly promiſed, and declared, to them, upon this their firſt ſincere, and undiſſembled Faith. SERM. XVI.

Now, ſuppoſing any of theſe Perſons to be taken away immediately: their former Sins being once pardoned, the Force of this Pardon muſt remain; and they muſt be finally acquitted and juſtified before God. But ſuppoſing any of theſe Proſelytes to live, and afterwards to relapſe into their former

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Courſe of Sin: They not only, by the Tenour of the Goſpel, loſe all the Benefit of this firſt Juſtification; but can have no Ground for Hope of a final Juſtification, at the great Day, without the actual Amendment and Reformation of their Lives. On the other hand, if they go on, in living as becomes Chriſtians; they are entitled to a final Acquittance, and to great Degrees of Happineſs in the World to come.

THERE are, therefore, Two ſorts of Perſons, conſidered as acquitted in the Goſpel. 1. Such as hear the Goſpel; and ſincerely receive, and heartily accept it; and openly profeſs it: who yet have no Time allowed them, by the Providence of God, to bring forth the Fruits of a continued Courſe of Righteouſneſs; though they certainly have ſuch a Faith as would bring forth theſe Fruits. And, 2. Such Perſons as ſincerely receive it; and cloſe in with the Terms of it; and, having Time allowed them, live, and act, in the general Courſe of their Lives, by the Rules of Righteouſneſs, laid down in it. As there are, likewiſe, Two ſorts of Perſons condemned, in the ſame Goſpel. 1. Such, as having Opportunity

portunity to hear it propoſed to them, either revile and perſecute it; or refuſe to attend to it, and receive it. And, 2. Such as, having heard it, receive and profeſs it; and enter themſelves into the Bonds of it: but afterwards relapſe into an Habit of Sin, in which they continue till Death overtake them. SERM. XVI.

THERE being, therefore, Two ſorts of Perſons, to whom Acquittance, or Juſtification, is openly promiſed in the Goſpel; we may be ſure, no one ſhall be denied that Favour, who belongs to either of the Two. And that the Malefactor on the Croſs, certainly belonged to the former ſort; and conſequently, was accepted by Chriſt, not by any arbitrary, or extraordinary Act of Favour, but upon the ordinary Terms of his Diſpenſation, is, I think, very evident. For it appears that He was a Perſon, who, when He had a fair Opportunity, did ſeriouſly conſider the Character, and Pretenſions of our Lord; who, upon that Conſideration, believed in Him, and received him, as the Meſſiah; and who took the firſt Opportunity He had, to declare and profeſs this: though He had no Hopes of any Benefit

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from hence, unleſs in a future State; and was rather diſcouraged from it, than incited to it, by the Tempers, and Behaviour, of all about Him. He was called to the Knowledge of the Goſpel; He obeyed that Call; and He did whatever was in his Power, during the ſhort Time God afforded him, to demonſtrate the Sincerity of his Faith. What ſhould hinder, therefore, but that he ſhould be received by our Lord, who came to offer Acquittance, and Juſtification, to all who ſhould believe him to be the *Meſſiah*; and ſhould act agreeably to the Faith, and Practice enjoyned by him, during the remainder of their Lives, whether long, or ſhort?

I CANNOT, therefore, but think it plain from hence, that there is nothing extraordinary, or new, in this Inſtance of the Juſtification of the Thief on the Croſs: that he was not declared to be accepted by God on the account of his Sorrow, or becauſe he was dying, and at that time expreſſed a Senſe of his Sins; but becauſe he laid hold on the firſt fair Opportunity, which offered it ſelf, of believing in Chriſt; of profeſſing himſelf his Diſciple, and of owning Him

Him for his Maſter; and, conſequently, that he was accepted to Favour, upon the ordinary Terms of the Goſpel, declared in other Places of the New Teſtament, upon which any other ſincere Believer, would likewiſe have been accepted and juſtified; and upon which, all Chriſtians inherit the ſame Juſtification, and reap the Fruit of it, if they do not, by falling again into a Courſe of Sin, and continuing in it, forfeit their Title to ſo great a Bleſſing. SERM. XVI.

WHAT hath been ſaid may likewiſe ſerve to give us ſome Account why the other Evangeliſts might not think it neceſſary to be minute, and particular, in the Relation of the Behaviour, and happy End, of the better of the Two Malefactors: *viz.* becauſe nothing material could be learnt, or drawn, from it, but what might be learnt from other plain Parts of the Goſpel; that whoever ſhould believe in Jeſus Chriſt, and make uſe of the Opportunities He enjoys to profeſs and ſhew himſelf to be ſincerely his Diſciple, ſhould, upon that Belief, and Profeſſion, be acquitted from the Guilt of all his paſt Sins; and be put into a State of Favour, and Acceptance, with

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with God; whether He ſhould live a long, or a ſhort Time, after his embracing the Chriſtian Faith. And now, what hath been already laid down will eaſily guide us to determine what I propoſed in the *third* place: *viz.*

III. WHO thoſe Perſons are, that may ſafely argue, to their own Comfort, from this Example of the Thief on the Croſs; and may be as ſecure of God's Favour, as He was. And it is plain, they muſt be ſuch, as are in his Circumſtances. I do not mean, ſuch as are leaving this World: for that was but an accidental Matter; and had no Weight towards his Acceptance; which, I have ſhewn, muſt have been the ſame, upon the Goſpel Terms, whether He had then been dying, or not. But I mean, ſuch Perſons, as do not reſiſt the Evidence of the Goſpel of Chriſt; but receive it upon due Conſideration; and take the Opportunity, offered them by the Providence of God, to profeſs their Faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and to acknowledge themſelves his Diſciples. They muſt be Perſons, who being come to Years of Diſcretion, have a fair Opportunity offered them of hearing

hearing the Evidence, and knowing the Nature, of the Chriſtian Religion. They muſt be Perſons who, upon hearing and weighing this Evidence, do ſincerely accept it as the Will of God; who openly and heartily, profeſs this; and who, during the reſt of their Time, behave themſelves agreeably to their Profeſſion. SERM. XVI.

AND we cannot but obſerve from hence, of how ſmall Concern, the Inſtance now before us is to Perſons bred up in the Knowledge of the Chriſtian Religion; called upon, day after day, to regard the Nature and Obligations, of it: to Perſons who have always profeſſed themſelves Chriſtians; and yet live on, in an Habit of Sin condemned by their own Profeſſion, in hopes that the Sorrow of their lateſt Moments ſhall atone for the Vices of their paſt Lives.

IF, therefore, any one would entertain himſelf with any juſt Hopes, drawn from God's Mercy to this crucified Malefactor; He muſt firſt, in all reaſon, conſider, whether He himſelf be in the like Circumſtances: for otherwiſe, what Comfort can any Man, in his Senſes, draw from thence?

And

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And no one, I think, can, by any means, be ſaid to be in the like Circumſtances, who is come to Years of Judgment, and Diſcretion, in a Country of profeſſed Chriſtians; and hath, either in his Mind, or in his Manners, diſhonoured, or neglected, the Chriſtian Religion. But this will more naturally come under the next Head of my preſent Deſign: which I have not now Time to proſecute.

I SHALL only, therefore, add at preſent, that for us, who are called betimes to the Knowledge of Chriſtianity; who have Opportunities of knowing our Duty; and profeſs our ſelves, from the beginning of our Lives, the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt: for us, I ſay, to have recourſe to any ſuch Inſtance as this, in order to defer our Repentance and Amendment, is the Extremity of Folly, and Weakneſs. Whatever it is, that makes us eaſy in the habitual Practice of any of the Vices condemned in the Goſpel, is certainly a Cheat and Impoſition upon our ſelves; a falſe and groundleſs Amuſement. And, therefore, from whenceſoever it is, that we may have drawn any ſuch Notions; we may aſſure our ſelves,

(and

(and it is our Eternal Intereſt to be aſſured of it,) that we are greatly miſtaken in them. Almighty God doth, as certainly and as plainly, require of us the Practice of all Righteouſneſs, as He promiſeth us all Happineſs. No Man ever was uneaſy at the Review of ſuch a Practice: but many a Man hath been rendered miſerable on his Death-bed here; and will be eternally undone hereafter; by truſting, in the Time of his Health, to any other falſe and faithleſs Methods. And God grant that We may conſider theſe Things, before they be hid from our Eyes! *Amen.*

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SER-

The Example of the Thief upon the Croſs, conſidered.

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LUKE xxiii. 42, 43.

And He ſaid unto Jeſus, Lord, Remember me when Thou comeſt into thy Kingdom.

And Jeſus ſaid unto Him, Verily, I ſay unto thee, To day ſhalt thou be with me in Paradiſe.

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IN my laſt Diſcourſe, (which was upon the Account given us, in theſe Words, of the happy Ending of the Life of one of the *Malefactors* crucified with our bleſſed Lord,) I propoſed *four* Heads: *three* of which I then went over; and ſhall

ſhall now proceed to the *fourth*, after I have made way for it, by reminding you of what I then, as I hope, very evidently proved. SERM. XVII.

IN diſcourſing on the *firſt*, I ſhewed you, that this *Malefactor* was one who, as ſoon as He had a fair Opportunity of knowing the Truth concerning the Character of our bleſſed Lord, and of hearing the Evidence of his Pretenſions, did ſincerely lay hold on it; and profeſs himſelf his Diſciple; and behave himſelf as ſuch, amidſt the Calumnies and Reproaches of all about him: and that for this Belief, and Profeſſion; not merely, or chiefly, on account of his Senſe of his paſt Sins; He was accepted, by our Lord, to Mercy.

UNDER the *ſecond* Head, I went on to ſhow you, that it was one profeſſed part of the Goſpel, preached both by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, that whoſoever ſhould lay hold on the Opportunity offered by the Providence of God; and ſhould accept of the Terms propoſed in the Goſpel; and believe in Jeſus Chriſt with an honeſt and ſincere Heart; and make open Profeſſion of this Belief: that every ſuch Perſon,

I ſay,

SERM. XVII. I ſay, ſhould be accepted to Favour; and effectually acquitted from the Guilt of his paſt Sins, whether He ſhould live a ſhort, or a long, Time after this Profeſſion; ſuppoſing Him to behave himſelf, during that Time, agreeably to it. And, in conſequence of this, I proved to you that this Thief on the Croſs, having ſincerely laid hold on the Opportunity offered to Him by Providence; having come to the Knowledge of our Lord's Character, and of the Evidence He gave of the Truth of his Divine Miſſion; and having, upon this, profeſſed himſelf his Diſciple, and ſhewn his Sincerity by behaving himſelf in all reſpects, as became ſuch an one, during that ſhort Time which was allowed him, after He was called to the Knowledge and Faith of Chriſt; that this Malefactor, I ſay, having acted thus, was accepted upon the ordinary, known, *Terms* of the *Goſpel*; not upon the ſecret and hidden Will of Almighty God deviating from, or going beyond, the common Rules of the *Chriſtian Inſtitution*; and that, therefore, this is no Inſtance of Almighty God's Acceptance of the Sorrow of a dying Man, inſtead of the Practice,

Practice of Virtue during his Life; much leſs, an Inſtance of his Acceptance of thoſe, on the account of their Death-bed Sorrow, who have known and profeſſed the Chriſtian Religion through their whole Lives, and have wilfully and habitually lived in expreſs Contradiction to its Deſign, and its Precepts, during the Time of that Profeſſion. SERM. XVII.

UNDER the *third* Head, I ſhewed you that thoſe Perſons only are in the Caſe of this Malefactor, ſo as to argue to their own Satisfaction, from his Example, upon any reaſonable Grounds, who, whether living or dying; whether in perfect Health, or within the Proſpect of Death; lay hold on the firſt fair Opportunity offered them: and ſeriouſly conſider the Evidence there is for the Chriſtian Religion; and ſincerely receive it upon that Evidence; and openly profeſs themſelves the Diſciples of Jeſus Chriſt; and behave themſelves, as becomes his Diſciples, through the remaining part of their Lives, whether long, or ſhort. And ſuch Perſons as theſe, I need not again obſerve to you, would have

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been entitled to the Juſtification, and Favour, promiſed in the Goſpel, upon the plain and expreſs Words of our Lord and his Apoſtles; whether there had been any ſuch Inſtance, as this of the believing and penitent Malefactor, recorded in the Goſpel, or not.

HAVING thus recalled to your Minds what I have already advanced, I may with the more Advantage proceed to the *fourth* thing which I propoſed, *viz.*

IV. To ſhow plainly the extreme Unreaſonableneſs, and great Danger, of the common Miſtakes about this Inſtance of God's Mercy; and the Vanity of thoſe Pretenſes which ſome Men have built upon this Example. And here I ſhall mention particularly the Miſtakes of Two ſorts of Perſons: *viz.* The Miſtake of thoſe who miſapply this Inſtance to their own Ruine; and the Miſtake of thoſe who take occaſion from it to implant in others very wrong, and very pernicious, Notions concerning *Deſpair*, and *Preſumption.*

1. FROM what hath been ſaid, it manifeſtly appears how great, as well as fatal, a Miſtake

a Miſtake that is, which ſome Perſons have perſuaded themſelves to entertain, from this Inſtance of the crucified Thief: that God will accept them at laſt, for the ſake of a Death-bed Sorrow and Concern for their paſt Sins; though they have been, all through their Lives, profeſſed Chriſtians, and have neglected to obey thoſe Laws, which they knew to be impoſed upon them by the Chriſtian Religion, as the Rules of their Actions. The Weakneſs and extreme Folly of arguing at this rate, from this Inſtance, will appear plainly to any one, who will ſeriouſly conſider the Caſe of ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians; and compare it with what hath been before ſaid concerning the Caſe of that Malefactor, and the Conditions of Acceptance laid down in the Goſpel. SERM. XVII.

FOR it is evident, from the Account which I have given of both theſe, that His Caſe was ſuch as comes within the profeſſed Terms of the Goſpel: upon which all who lay hold on the Opportunity given them; and hear, and receive, and profeſs, the Chriſtian Religion ſincerely; are

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accepted immediately to Favour, and releaſed from the Guilt of their former Sins. Whereas the Caſe of ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians as I have been now ſpeaking of, is a condemned Caſe, upon the profeſſed Terms of the ſame Goſpel. For if the Goſpel ſaith any thing at all, it plainly affirms this, that thoſe Perſons who, after they have received the Faith of Jeſus Chriſt, and been made Partakers of this firſt Juſtification, do relapſe into a Courſe, or Habit, of thoſe Sins which are condemned in the Goſpel; and continue in that Courſe till Death overtake them: that thoſe Perſons, I ſay, who do this, ſhall be excluded the Kingdom of Heaven; and, inſtead of God's Favour, ſhall feel his Wrath, and ſuffer the Vengeance of Eternal Fire. Now, as Almighty God did, in forgiving and accepting the believing Malefactor, keep exactly to the Terms, which our bleſſed Lord had, in his Name, promulgated: ſo, there is all the reaſon in the World to conclude that, in condemning and puniſhing that other ſort of Perſons, who have contradicted and ſcandalized

dalized his Goſpel, by their Behaviour during their Chriſtian Profeſſion, He will likewiſe keep cloſe to the Terms which He hath, in the Goſpel, ſet before the Eyes of the World. And in this Goſpel, there is another Law promulgated, as the Rule of Judgment in the Caſe of ſuch Perſons. They are called to the Knowledge of Chriſtianity; they have Time allowed them to live in the Practice of its Precepts, and by that means to ſecure, and encreaſe, their future Happineſs: and yet they tranſgreſs its Commands; and, to all their repeated Affronts to God and his Laws, they add the Aſſurance of imagining, and expecting, that He will deal with them, as He deals with Men, who ſincerely receive, and profeſs the Chriſtian Religion; and do whatever they can, in that ſhorter Time which is allowed them, to demonſtrate the Sincerity of their inward Belief, and outward Profeſſion. SERM. XVII.

ALMIGHTY God doth all his Works with the moſt exact Proportion: nor can it eaſily be imagined that perfect Wiſdom, and perfect Power, can do otherwiſe.

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And there is no doubt, therefore, but that He will diſpenſe his Rewards and Puniſhments, with the greateſt Equity, and Impartiality. Now can it be conſiſtent with any Rules of Equity and Proportion, to make thoſe equal in a State of Retribution, whoſe Caſes, and Behaviour, have been vaſtly different, in a State of Tryal? But, beſides this, it is ſufficiently declared to us, in the Name of Almighty God, that He will very much conſider, what Light hath been afforded; what Powers Perſons have enjoyed; what Time hath been allowed them; what Improvement they have made of this Light; what uſe they have made of theſe Powers; and how they have ſpent this Time, that they have had granted to them. And though He will very favourably deal with thoſe who enjoy leſſer Degrees of Light, and Power; and no happy Opportunities of Improvement; as Equity requires: yet this is far from ſhewing that He will be equally favourable to thoſe who have enjoyed greater Advantages, and happier Opportunities; and have made no other uſe of them,

them, but to affront and diſhonour both God, and Religion, the more. On the contrary, the only Ground of his Favour to the former ſort, being their want of Light, and Opportunity; this rather implies in it, that where he hath afforded Light, and Opportunity, there He may juſtly, and will certainly, require a ſtrict and ſevere Account of the Uſe and Improvement that have been made of them.

INDEED, in the *Parable* of the *Labourers* hired, at ſeveral Hours, into the Vineyard, *Matth.* XX. 1. ſome have been apt to think that the Method of Proceeding is ſuch, as to encourage Chriſtians to depend upon what they ſhall be able to do in their laſt Moments; and to hope, on the account of That, to be made equal, in the Favour of God, to thoſe who have ſerved Him faithfully, through their whole Lives; and ſo, to conclude that it is no great Matter, how long ſoever they defer their Repentance. This *Parable* I ſhall, therefore, in my next Diſcourſe, diſtinctly and fully conſider. At preſent, I ſhall ony obſerve that it was chiefly intended to ſig-

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nify to the *Jews* that Almighty God would make the *Gentiles* equal to them, in all Privileges, if they did, in the *laſt Age of the World* (as the *Goſpel-Age* is called) accept the Invitation given them; and believe, and obey, the Doctrine of the Goſpel: which Interpretation wholy takes away the Ground of the Objection. And, as far as it can be ſuppoſed to concern particular Perſons, I muſt obſerve, that it can only ſignify that God will reward all ſuch with his Favours, as do, whenever they are called to the Knowledge of the Goſpel, heartily embrace it, and readily obey the Precepts of it, how little Time ſoever be allowed them for ſo doing.

BUT can any one, though never ſo willing to be impoſed upon, in this Caſe, find out, I will not ſay in this *Parable*, but in the whole *New Teſtament*, any reward for thoſe who are called to the Knowledge of the Goſpel in the beginning of their Lives, in the firſt Hours of their Day; and yet either refuſe to come in, upon ſo gracious an Invitation; or elſe, profeſſing to obey that Call, and entering themſelves into

to his Religion, and pretending to accept the Terms offered by our bleſſed Lord, not only prove uſeleſs and negligent of their Lord's Honour and Service: but even ſpend that Time which is due, upon their own Contract, to the Service of their Maſter, in ruining his good Deſigns; in diſhonouring his Name; in abuſing their Fellow-Servants; or in ſome other ſort of Practice, detrimental to their Maſter's true Intereſt, or inconſiſtent with the Office which they have taken upon themſelves? Where do we read of any ſuch Servants as theſe, rewarded and honoured, at laſt, by their Maſter? Whenever we meet with the mention of any ſuch, in the *Goſpel*, it is with a very ſad Concluſion, at the End of their Story: and this merely for not improving the *Talents* committed to them; for the neglecting to do God poſitive Service in their Stations; for not uſing the Opportunities, and Abilities, put into their Hands by Providence, for their own Eternal Intereſt, and the Honour of their great Maſter? How much more ſhall this heavy Sentence be pronounced upon ſuch as not only have not improved

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ved the Time, and Abilities, and Advantages, put into their Hands; but have likewiſe uſed this Time, and theſe Abilities, and Advantages, which God in mercy hath afforded them, to the Diſſervice of Himſelf, and the Diſgrace of his holy Religion; doing very great Miſchief by their Example and Influence; affronting God, and making his Enemies to blaſpheme? Where do we read, all through the Goſpel, of any ſuch Perſon, after a Continuance of Affronts and Indignities offered to Almighty God, during his Chriſtian Profeſſion, accepted at laſt to Mercy, on Account of the Sorrow of his dying Hour? That which hath, moſt of all, inclined Men to be deceived in this Caſe, is the Inſtance of the crucified Malefactor: and this Inſtance, we have now evidently ſeen, to be at the greateſt diſtance from any Likeneſs to the *Caſe* of ſuch as are profeſſed Chriſtians, and live on, in a Courſe of Sin, under the Influence of ſo groundleſs an Expectation. How great, therefore, as well as fatal, muſt the Miſtake of thoſe be, who being Chriſtians, and having many and continued Opportunities

nities of living worthy of that Name, ſtill continue wilfully in their Sins; and argue themſelves into a fond Expectation of God's Mercy at laſt, from an *Inſtance* which bears no manner of relation to the Condition, and Circumſtances, in which *They* are? SERM. XVII.

2. I SHALL now mention another Miſtake, which is uſually founded upon the Inſtance of the crucified Malefactor: and that is, the Miſtake of thoſe, who do not, indeed, make any ill uſe of it in the Conduct of their own Lives; but yet make uſe of it, to encourage the *Preſumption*, and prevent the *Deſpair*, of dying Sinners, who have lived all their Lives long, in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, and in the Violation of its Laws; and this, to the great Prejudice of other Chriſtians who ſurvive them. This Miſtake, I confeſs, as far as it is founded upon this Inſtance, is ſo much the ſame, with the former, in the Ground of it, that it can hardly be reckoned as diſtinct from it: and it hath been ſufficiently confuted, under this View, by what I have ſaid, upon the *former*, to ſhew that this *Inſtance* toucheth not the Caſe of ſuch profeſſed Chriſtians

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ans. But, as it is applied to another Purpoſe; and as it is not only founded upon this Example of the *crucified Malefactor*, but upon very wrong, and groundleſs, Notions concerning *Preſumption* and *Deſpair*; it ſeems to deſerve a particular, and diſtinct place, in the preſent Debate, as it will give occaſion for the ſettling the true Nature of thoſe Two Diſpoſitions of Mind: the miſunderſtanding of which hath certainly been the reaſon of repreſenting what is generally called *Deſpair*, as the greateſt of Sins; and of making what is truly a *criminal Preſumption*, to be a neceſſary Duty.

Now here I ſhall lay down one Propoſition, which is ſufficient to determine this Matter: *viz.* That theſe Two Diſpoſitions of Mind muſt be judged of, by the profeſſed Terms of the Goſpel; and not by any ſuppoſed Poſſibilities. And, according to theſe, I think it is evident that for One who hath, againſt all the Calls of God's Spirit, and all the Checks of his own Conſcience, continued to live in a conſtant Courſe of Sin; for ſuch an one, I ſay to hope, with any ſort of Aſſurance, that God will bring him

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to the Happineſs, promiſed in the Goſpel only to Holineſs and Righteouſneſs, is not a virtuous Hope; becauſe it is an Hope without any Ground, or ſolid Foundation: but is a vain, and groundleſs *Preſumption*; and ſuch a *Preſumption*, as ſeems, in truth, to affront Almighty God, by ſuppoſing that He will depart, for this Man's Sake, from his own declared and profeſſed Terms. And, on the contrary, for ſuch an one to *Deſpair*; that is, to think that He, having continued through the Time of his Health, and Converſation in the World, an habitual Sinner; and being that wicked Man, whom the *Goſpel* conſtantly, and in multitudes of Paſſages, condemns; that He, I ſay, being ſuch an one, ſhall be condemned at the great Day, as the *Goſpel* ſaith: This is indeed his Miſery; but is ſo far from being his Sin, that I do not ſee, if He believeth the Goſpel, how He can poſſibly avoid thinking ſo. But, as if it were of no Importance to be guided by the Declarations of the *Goſpel* it ſelf, in this great Affair; dying Chriſtians, who have lived a Life of habitual and wilful Wickedneſs, have been

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led into ſuch Notions of theſe Two Things, that they have come to think this groundleſs *Preſumption* their Duty: and, what is of worſe conſequence, many By-ſtanders have been fatally corrupted into a Security in ſinning, by the ſame Expectations from this unreaſonable Confidence in God. Whereas there is nothing in this Confidence, that can alter, or affect, the Nature of Things: nor is there any Paſſage in the whole *New Teſtament*, which recommends ſuch a *Confidence*, in ſuch Circumſtances; or which implieth in it, that it is the Duty of ſuch Perſons, or any Advantage to them in the Eyes of God, to be confident of thoſe Mercies, of which, in truth, He hath ſolemnly declared they ſhall never partake.

IT is true that many of the beſt ſort of Chriſtians may, in a low and afflicted Condition, entertain an unreaſonable and groundleſs Deſpondency, or Deſpair. They may imagine that they have not been thoſe Chriſtians, who ſhall be rewarded at laſt; and be filled with very melancholy Apprehenſions concerning their future Condition. But this Imagination of theirs cannot affect their

their future State: which will be determi- SERM.
ned by that God who knows all things as XVII.
they are; and will deal with them, accord-
ing to what they really have been; not according to what they imagine themſelves to have been. And this Imagination, proceeding from an Exceſs of Humility, or from bodily Diſorder, is only their preſent Unhappineſs; not their Sin: and is removed far from them, as ſoon as they themſelves are removed out of this State. Whereas the *Deſpondency* of thoſe profeſſed Chriſtians, who have reſolutely continued wicked to the laſt, is truly well-grounded upon the Goſpel-Declarations; and, as it is ſo, is likewiſe part of their Puniſhment, begun in this World, in the inward Torment of their own Minds: which, if it might be removed from them, upon any Promiſe, or Declaration, of God, I ſhould moſt willingly do it. But who would dare to incite them to aſſure themſelves of the Favour of that God, who hath ſo plainly declared that They ſhall not ſee his Face; and that He will be to ſuch Sinners *a conſuming Fire*.

NAY,

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NAY, is it not to bring a laſting Diſgrace upon the Cauſe of Virtue, to teach that the confident Aſſurance of the moſt profligate Sinner, when He comes to die, (perhaps, a more confident Aſſurance than the beſt of Chriſtians commonly have,) ſhall ſet him as much out of the reach of God's Diſpleaſure; and in as ſecure a Condition; as that of the moſt virtuous Perſons, who have ſpent their whole Lives in the Contemplation, and Practice, of the Laws of Chriſtianity. The *Goſpel* is far from ſaying any ſuch thing: and, therefore, the *Preachers* of the *Goſpel* muſt likewiſe be far from entertaining the Conſciences of Chriſtians with any ſuch Fancies; who, if they have any Senſe themſelves, will not eaſily ſwallow ſuch unreaſonable Doctrines.

I GRANT, indeed, that the beſt thing which the moſt wicked of Chriſtians can do, when they come within View of Death; and what all about them ought to encourage them to do; is to make themſelves as ſenſible, as they poſſibly can, of the Evil of their paſt Ways; to move themſelves, upon the beſt Conſiderations, to abhor and deteſt

teſt them; and ſolemnly to warn all about them from the Paths, in which themſelves have walked. But, after all this, who could ſay that theſe Perſons have come up, in any tolerable degree, to the Terms of the Goſpel? Or, who could encourage any ſuch notorious Sinners to aſſure themſelves of the Mercy of God, unleſs a plain Text of Scripture, or Law of Reaſon, could be found, ſuitable to their Caſe, or promiſing them Happineſs? They muſt ſtill be left (as far as the Goſpel hath concerned it ſelf) in the State, in which That pronounceth wilful and habitual Sinners to be. The utmoſt that can be ſaid is, that they muſt be left to the *uncovenanted Mercies* of God: and the higheſt degree of hope which they can have, muſt be founded upon this, that Almighty God may poſſibly depart from his ſettled Method; and recede from the Terms which He hath openly profeſſed, for the ſake of thoſe, who have lived, Year after Year, in an open Violation of his Laws; againſt all the Checks of their Conſciences, and all the Calls of his Goſpel. Which let *them* believe, who can ſwallow, and embrace,

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any Abſurdities, rather than forſake their Sins.

HAVING, as I hope, very evidently ſhewn that there is nothing, in this Inſtance of the believing and penitent Malefactor, which can, with the leaſt Colour of Reaſon, encourage any, who have been, through many Years, profeſſed Chriſtians, and habitual Sinners, to depend upon the Sorrow of their Death-beds, for Acceptance with God; and having thus finiſhed what I propoſed to diſcourſe of from this Example: I ſhall now take occaſion to enquire whether, in the nature of the thing it ſelf, there be any greater Ground for Hope, than, We have ſeen, there is in the Inſtance We have been conſidering. And this, I think, will be very proper, not only becauſe the Subject naturally enough leads us to it; but becauſe it is very obſervable that one great Support of ſuch unhappy Perſons, as go on in a Courſe of Sin, and yet retain ſome Senſe of Religion, and make Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, is the Hope which they have placed in the Sorrow of their Death-beds, as if there were ſome peculiar Charm,

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and Efficacy, in *that*, above any other Sorrow, (which they falſely call Repentance,) conceived, or expreſſed, in any other Part of their Lives. SERM. XVII.

Now, in what is it that this laſt Sorrow hath the Advantage over any other? In what it agrees with the Sorrow, and Regret, which a Man hath felt in the Time of his Health, it cannot be preferr'd before it: becauſe it differs not from it. And in what it really differs from it, I fear, it will be found to have the Diſadvantage on its ſide. For it ſeems to me that it is much leſs likely to be ſincere, or ſuch as would, upon Trial, prove effectual, than the other: it being probably rather extorted by the Proſpect and Fear of Death, than by the Perſuaſion of Reaſon; and frequently accompanied with ſuch Terrors, as make it rather a Diſtraction, than a rational Grief, or a conſcientious Sorrow. Whereas, a Regret and Concern for paſt Sins, in Time of Health, and whilſt a Man hath not ſo near a Proſpect of a State of Retribution, may be ſuppoſed more ſincere, and more likely to influence Him: becauſe it may

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juſtly be thought to be more the Reſult of Reaſon, and Judgment; and rather proceeding from a well-grounded Perſuaſion of the Man's own Mind, and the juſt Conſideration of the Nature of Things, than from the terrible Dread of immediate Puniſhment.

AND yet how is this laſt Sorrow uſually preferr'd; and accounted of a more excellent Nature than any of the former? One would think, merely becauſe it is the laſt. Whereas *that* can make no difference in the Eyes of God: who always judgeth truly, from the nature of the Thing; and not from the *Time*, or any of thoſe inconſiderable Circumſtances, which often hide the true nature of things from mortal Eyes, and finite Underſtandings. Nay, we our ſelves cannot judge whether our own preſent Sorrow, and Compunction, be of that nature as that they would work in us true Repentance and Amendment; were we entruſted with more Opportunities of making the Trial. And this is another Reaſon why we ſhould build nothing upon it, either in our own Caſe, or that of others; becauſe, even ſuppoſing

ſuppoſing that it would be ſincere, and effectual in its Influences, were more Time allowed; yet this is a Matter wholy out of the reach of our Knowledge, and wholy impoſſible for us to judge of. SERM. XVII.

BUT, indeed, it is a very material Obſervation, that wicked Men have much leſs reaſon to think this laſt Sorrow thoroughly and undoubtedly ſincere, than they have heretofore had to think any of their former Sorrows ſo; which yet, they know, have ended in nothing conſiderable. There are few profeſſed Chriſtians, even amongſt the wickedeſt of them, who have not, one time or other, had ſome juſt and concerning Thoughts about that Courſe of Sin, and thoſe wilful Vices, in which they have indulged themſelves; who have not, one time or other, deteſted and reſolved to forſake them, in the Days of their Health and Proſperity; when they had nothing to move them but the Nature of the thing, and the great Reaſonableneſs of receiving, and obeying, the Goſpel. If, therefore, they have found that Regret, and Concern, which they have had, in the beſt Seaſon,

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and which had ſo good Ground for it, to come to nothing; to vaniſh into Air; and leave no good Influence, nor ſhew any Power, upon their Lives and Actions: upon what Accounts can they think, That Sorrow would have any better, or more laſting, Effect, were the Trial made, which for ought they know, is wholy owing to the preſent Fear of Death, and the near Proſpect of a future Puniſhment; and conſequently will moſt probably vaniſh, when that Fear, and that Proſpect, are removed from them?

THEY will, I dare ſay, acknowledge no ſuch Sorrow of a ſick Bed, to be of any Effect, if they recover, and relapſe to their former Sins. And how many ſuch Inſtances have they ſeen in others? And how often have they themſelves relapſed, after a better, and more reaſonable, Sorrow, than this can be eſteemed? And how then can they ſo flatter themſelves, as to imagine that this laſt, and unproved, Sorrow is truly ſincere; and would be truly effectual, were Opportunity given it to ſhew its Power, and diſplay its Influences: when they have

have not one probable Argument on their ſide, to give Ground for ſuch an Imagination; but great Preſumptions, and much Experience, againſt it. So that there is no Foundation for ſuch a Suppoſition: and yet, without it, there is not the leaſt Shadow of Hope, to ſupport them. How miſerably deluded, therefore, muſt they be, who thus rely upon a Reed; who thus build all their Hopes, and all their Expectations of Happineſs, upon that which is of a weaker nature, than what, they have experienced, to have deceived them already; who would fain eſcape Miſery, and attain to Happineſs, and yet will take none but a deſperate Method, and ſuch an one, as will too certainly diſappoint and cheat them at laſt!

AND that they, who indulge themſelves in the Habit of any ſort of Sins, may be the more effectually ſenſible of this; I would ask them, whether they believe that Almighty God will puniſh any ſort of Perſons in another State; or whether there are any Men in this World now, who ſhall be condemned, at the great Day, to that miſerable

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State which is threatned in the Goſpel. If they pretend not to believe any ſuch thing as this; why are they in ſuch Fears, and in ſo great Concern, about it? Why do the Terrors of the Lord oppreſs them? And why do they betray ſo much Uneaſineſs, at the Thoughts of appearing before Him? But if they do believe that thus it ſhall be with ſome ſort of Perſons, (as they appear to do by their Preſages, and Apprehenſions;) I would then ask, Who, they think, *they* are, that ſhall inherit moſt of the Anger of God in that future State. Surely, *They*, who, upon the account of their whole Lives, do moſt deſerve it. And who are they that moſt deſerve it? It muſt be either the *Wilful Sinners* of the unbelieving World; or the *Wilful Sinners*, who are profeſſed Chriſtians, and enjoy the Light, and Aſſiſtance, of Chriſt's Goſpel. And which of theſe Two do moſt deſerve it, is too evident to need many Words. For who can be ſo unreaſonable as to think that They who ſin not againſt ſo clear Light, and ſo evident a Divine Authority to the contrary, are in a more deſperate

perate Condition, than thoſe who are, or may be, fully acquainted with God's Will; who agree to the Reaſonableneſs of it; who profeſs to fulfil it; and yet live, through their whole Lives, in expreſs Contradiction to it? No, certainly, if our Saviour ſpeak Truth; or if the Rule of Equity be conſulted; They *ſhall be beaten with moſt Stripes, who have known their Maſter's Will, and have not done it*; They, who have had all fair Opportunities for Reformation, and the Practice of Virtue, and have abuſed them all to the Purpoſes of Vice. SERM. XVII.

IF, therefore, *They* ſhall be moſt miſerable in another State, who have moſt deſerved it; as without doubt they ſhall: tell me, I beſeech you, who can deſerve it more than the Chriſtian, who hath the greateſt Favours, and Obligations, beſtowed upon Him; the holieſt Law to govern Him; the brighteſt Light to direct Him; the moſt powerful Aſſiſtance to ſtrengthen Him; and yet goes on to ſin, againſt all the Obligations, and all the Engagements, and all the Motives, to the contrary, which are contained in his Profeſſion,

SERM. XVII. feſſion. And conſequently, unleſs you will ſuppoſe, and maintain, that there ſhall be no ſuch thing as Puniſhment in another World; but that all ſhall equally, either ſink into nothing, or be made happy; you muſt be perſuaded of this, as of a certain Truth, that the wicked Chriſtian, who continues a wilful Sinner, under the Cloke of his holy Profeſſion, is the Perſon, who, becauſe He moſt of all deſerves this Puniſhment, ſhall therefore moſt undoubtedly inherit it. Nor can his Grief, when He comes within View of it, alter the Caſe: for *Grief* is not Holineſs, nor Virtue; nor probably would it end in the Practice of them: and *theſe* are the Things required of Chriſtians, in the Time of their Health, and during their Converſation in this World. But I need not, I hope, add any more Words, in order to repreſent to you the Vanity and Weakneſs of that fatal Miſtake of ſome wilful Sinners, that the Sorrow, which they reſerve to be expreſſed upon their Death-beds, will atone for the profligate, and unchriſtian, Conduct of their whole paſt Lives.

AND

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AND now, Chriſtians, what ſhall we ſay to theſe Things? Shall not all that hath been urged to ſhew the Unreaſonableneſs of thoſe Hopes which are built upon any ſuch Pretenſe, as I have now been examining, ſeparated from a Life of Righteouſneſs, and true Goodneſs: ſhall it not, I ſay, move us all to lay hold on the preſent Opportunity; and to *work out our Salvation*, *whilſt the Day laſts*; *becauſe the Night cometh*, (the *Night* of Sickneſs, and of Death,) *when no Man can work?* How happy would it be for us, would we be induced to live as becomes Chriſtians; and worthy of that holy Name by which we are called; and of that Divine Maſter, to whom We have given up our ſelves? This is the Thing required of *Us*, who have Time allowed us to ſhew the Sincerity of our *Faith* and *Profeſſion:* and this alone it is, that can entitle us to the Favour of God, and the Rewards of Heaven. If we be in earneſt ſeeking after Happineſs; let us not take the Road which leads to certain Miſery: but that good Path which our Lord himſelf hath

SER. XVII. hath marked out to us, both by his Example, and his Precepts; which will infallibly bring us to his Heavenly Kingdom. *Amen!*

The Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, conſidered.

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MATTHEW xx. 1, *&c.*

For the Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Man that is an Houſholder, which went out early in the Morning to hire Labourers into his Vineyard, &c.

IN my laſt Diſcourſe, I obſerved to you that ſome Perſons had miſtaken and perverted the *Parable* in this Chapter; vainly arguing, from one part of it, that the *laſt Hour*, or even the laſt Minute, of Life, may be ſufficient for the Work of Repentance, and turning to God. In *that*, I only propoſed one or two Conſiderations

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derations in general: but I now deſign to handle this Matter more particularly; that it may the more clearly be ſeen, not only that this *Parable* gives not the leaſt Encouragement to any ſuch Thought; but that it really proves to all, who profeſs Chriſtianity, the abſolute Neceſſity of Holineſs and Virtue, before the laſt Sickneſs, and Death, approach. In order to this, it will be neceſſary,

I. To lay before you an Account of the *Parable* it ſelf.

II. To ſhew you, what was intended to be ſignified by it.

III. To prove that there is no Foundation in it, for any ſuch Imagination, as that before-mentioned: but an actual Declaration of the contrary.

I. As for the *Parable* it ſelf; it ſets forth to us an *Houſholder going forth into the Market-place, to hire Men* to come and work for Him, in his *Vineyard*; that He met with ſome ſooner than He did with others; that thoſe whom He hired lateſt, came as ſoon as He called and invited them; and laboured heartily for the Time that

that they were in his Vineyard; and, at the End of their Day, were by his Favour rewarded, for that ſincere and hearty, though ſhort, Labour, with the ſame Reward which He had agreed to beſtow upon thoſe whom He hired much ſooner. This is the Summ of the *Parable*; as far as it concerns my preſent Deſign: for it is not of Importance to relate every particular Circumſtance of it. The main Matter here to be conſidered, is the Reward beſtowed upon Thoſe who came ſo late into the Vineyard. SERM. XVIII.

II. I MUST therefore, now ſhew you what was intended by this *Parable*. And it is plain that it was deſigned to repreſent the Method of God in diſpenſing his Favours and Rewards to the World. *The Kingdom of Heaven*, or the Method of God's dealing with Mankind in the Revelation of his Will, and the calling of them to himſelf, was to be ſet forth in it. But, to be more particular,

1. IT is moſt probable, and, I believe, certain, that the main, if not the whole, Deſign of it, was to account for that great Stumbling-

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Stumbling-block, as it was indeed, to the ill-natur'd *Jews*; *viz.* God's calling in the *Gentiles* to Himſelf, after the *Jews*; and making Them equal to Theſe, in Privileges and Favours, upon their ſincere Acceptance of his Invitation. In the *laſt Verſe* of the preceding *Chapter*, our Lord declareth that *many that are firſt ſhall be laſt, and the laſt firſt*: that is, that, in thoſe firſt called to the Knowledge of God, *viz.* the *Jews*, and thoſe to be called after them, *viz.* the *Gentiles*, God would make no difference; provided He found a ſincere Diſpoſition to obey his Call, and ſerve Him truly. Then immediately, at the *firſt Verſe* of the 20th *Chapter*, our Lord goes on to illuſtrate what He had there ſaid; and to diſcover the Equity of it.

IN this Senſe then, of the *Parable*, Almighty God is repreſented as calling Mankind at ſeveral Ages of the World: the *Jews*, and their Forefathers, in the firſt Ages; and, in the *laſt Age*, viz. that of the Goſpel, as calling the *Gentile* World to the Knowledge of himſelf; and admitting them to equal Privileges with the *Jews*, who

who thought themſelves his peculiar People; and rewarding them after the ſame manner, upon their ſincere Compliance with his Terms, and Acceptance of his Invitation. The *Gentile* World are repreſented as coming into his Goſpel, upon his Call; and living worthy of it after their coming into it: and our Lord is repreſented, at the End of the Day of this Life, as rewarding Them, as much as the *Jews* themſelves, who were called to the Knowledge of God, in a ſo much earlier Age. SERM. XVIII.

THAT which makes it moſt probable that this was the true Intent of our Lord, in this *Parable*, is, that this calling of the *Gentiles* to equal Privileges with the *Jews*, was certainly a Matter which was to be opened by due Degrees, even to the beſt-temper'd amongſt them; who were averſe enough to all Thoughts of it: and likewiſe, that there is expreſs mention made in it, of the murmuring of thoſe *who were hired firſt*, againſt the Maſter of the Houſe, for rewarding the *laſt* equally with them. For this agrees very well with the uncon-

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quered Prejudices of the *Jewiſh* Nation; and that Selfiſhneſs of Mind, by which they had ſet themſelves apart from the reſt of the World, and could not bear to think of any who might be equal Sharers with themſelves in the Favour of God, whoſe People they had ſo long been. But it doth not ſeem ſo well to agree with a good Chriſtian's Temper; to repine, and murmur, that any other ſincere Perſons are made as happy, by the Favour of Almighty God, as Himſelf is. It rather adds to ſuch an one's Happineſs, to ſee others happy, than ſowrs and ſpoils it. But,

2. LET us ſuppoſe that the *Parable* was intended to ſignify to us the Method of God's dealing with particular Perſons, in the great Affair of their Happineſs, and Salvation. And then, what is ſet forth in it, is this, that Almighty Cod, doth, in his Providence, call and invite ſome Perſons to the Chriſtian Religion ſooner than others; and that thoſe who come lateſt to the Knowledge of his Will, if they readily lay hold on his Invitation; if they accept his Offer; (nor doth the Parable go any farther

farther than the *firſt* Offer;) and comply with his Terms; and enter into his Church; and labour in it; working out their own Salvation, and producing all manner of good Fruits, during that Seaſon of Life which is allowed them after this Call, and Invitation: that thoſe, I ſay, who are thus called, and do thus behave themſelves upon ſuch Call, ſhall, for that hearty Sincerity, be equalled in reward, by Almighty God, to thoſe whom they would have certainly equalled in their Labours, if they had been as ſoon called and invited into his Church. SERM. XVIII.

III. HAVING thus laid down what was certainly, or might poſſibly be, intended by this *Parable:* it will be the eaſier to ſhew that there is no Foundation in it for any ſuch Imagination, as that the late Sorrow, falſely called Repentance, of any Chriſtian who hath been a wilful habitual Sinner through the whole Courſe of his Life and Health, will atone at laſt, for his Sins; and make him the Object of God's Favour: For,

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1. IF we take the firſt Account now given of the meaning of this *Parable*, which is certainly the true one; then there is nothing contained in it, but that the *Gentile* World, though called to the Knowledge of God much later than the *Jews*, yet, upon their acceptance of that Call, and their hearty application of themſelves to Chriſtian good Works, ſhall be accepted to equal Privileges, with the *Jews*, who had ſo long before them, been the peculiar People of God. This, therefore, cannot poſſibly bear any relation to the Caſe of ſuch particular Chriſtians, as have been long called to the Knowledge of God, and have wilfully neglected to do the Works of him that called them. No two Matters can be more diſtant from one another, than theſe two are: And, therefore, there can be no imaginable Argument drawn, from one to the other. But,

2. SUPPOSING that the *Second* Interpretation be pitch'd upon: yet, even upon this Suppoſition, the *Parable* ſets forth all of them that are hired, as *Labourers*. The *Houſholder* went out to hire *Labourers* into his

his Vineyard: not ſuch as profeſſed only to labour; but ſuch as would actually do it. So that it is to none but ſuch, that he agrees to give any Reward. And when the Perſons hired are ſpoken of, they are all deſcribed as truly ſetting themſelves to labour, as ſoon as they are invited, and called in. All the difference is, that ſome are met with earlier; and ſome later; but as ſoon as they are ſpoken to, they all immediately leave their former Station; and apply themſelves to work. There is mention indeed, of ſome *ſtanding idle*: but it was in the *Market-place*; and it was only becauſe they had met with *no body to hire them* to work. But as ſoon as they are hired, there is no mention of their Idleneſs in the Vineyard: but there they work'd, immediately, as ſoon as they enter'd; and continued to do ſo, as long as the Day laſted,

WHAT is there then for a Chriſtian to learn from hence? Why, If this *Parable* touch his particular Caſe; what He muſt learn, is this, *viz.* that the Supreme Houſholder, when He calls him into his Vineyard, the Church, hires him as a *Labourer*;

SERM. XVIII. and, under that Notion only, agrees with Him for a Reward; that, as ſoon as He is called to the Knowledge of the Goſpel, his time is come for beginning to work; that, as long as He lives a Profeſſor of the Goſpel, ſo long doth the *Day* laſt in which He is to work; that, if He enter'd into this Religion in his young and early Days, He muſt in his young and early Days labour in the Works of it; that, if He were old before He came to the Knowledge of it, and had Chriſtianity propoſed to Him, He muſt immediately lay hold on the Propoſal; He muſt heartily profeſs himſelf a Diſciple of the Maſter who invites him; He muſt immediately ſet himſelf to his Work, and continue to approve himſelf a faithful Servant to Him, as long as his State of Probation laſts. This is what this *Parable* plainly ſets forth. For there is not one of thoſe mention'd, who did not come into the Vineyard, and work in it, as ſoon as He was called; not one, who was idle, unleſs out of neceſſity before He was hired; not one, who continued idle afterwards, or did not heartily work in the Vineyard; not one, who

who delayed his coming in, or uſed any pretenſe to avoid working, while the time for working laſted: And, therefore, we find that, their Sincerity being equal, which is the Ground of all, their Lord made their Rewards equal. SERM. XVIII.

IF therefore, We will apply this to the State of particular Perſons in Chriſt's Vineyard, the Church; there can be no hopes of Reward, according to this *Parable*, but to ſuch as carefully and conſcientiouſly ſet themſelves to work in their State of Trial; to ſuch as come in, when God calls them; and make uſe of all their Time afterwards, to promote his Honour, and work out their own Salvation. The Perſon, who is called laſt, and yet hath a Reward, is one who hath not heard of the Goſpel till Age is come upon him; but, as ſoon as He doth hear of it, embraces it; enters into the Service of it; and ſhews himſelf, in the time He hath to live after this, a true and ſincere Diſciple of it, by the amendment and reformation of his Life.

HAD it been ſo indeed, that our Lord had repreſented the *Houſholder*, as calling

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Men into his Vineyard; and, after they had enter'd into it, and profeſſed to work, and yet ſpent their time in it idly, or miſchievouſly; either in doing nothing, or in ruining his Intereſt; as rewarding ſuch Perſons equally with thoſe who had labour'd hard; and this merely for their expreſſing a Sorrow at Night, for the wilful Faults of the whole Day: ſomething then might have been urged; and there might be ſome colour from hence, for hoping that Almighty God will at laſt reward Chriſtians, who profeſs his Service, and enter his Vineyard as Labourers, and live uſeleſs, wicked, and profligate Lives; merely for their ſorrowful Concern for their Sins, at the end of their Day of Trial. But, as the Caſe is; and as the *Parable* is expreſſed: what is there, I beſeech you, in it, that can poſſibly encourage any ſuch Hope? Nay, what is there in it, but what forcibly ſhews the neceſſity of Chriſtian good Works, for the Juſtification of all who are called into Chriſt's Vineyard; whether early or late; whether at the beginning, or towards the end, of their Days?

WE,

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WE, for our parts, generally ſpeaking, are called into God's Vineyard, at the very firſt Hour of the Day, at the dawning of our Lives; educated in the Chriſtian Religion; called upon, day after day, to live worthy of that Holy Vocation wherewith we are called, and of that Profeſſion which we make. We are not, therefore, of the Number of thoſe who ſtood *Idle in the Market-place*, merely becauſe no one would hire them; and ſo were but late called into the Vineyard. But we have been long ago *hired* by God himſelf; and invited into his Service by the promiſe of the moſt immenſe and unſpeakable Rewards. If, therefore, we *ſtand Idle*; it is in his Vineyard, in which we undertook to do him Service. And if it be asked, *why ſtand you here all the day Idle?* We cannot have that to urge, *becauſe no Body hath hired us:* for God Almighty is our Maſter; and we are his profeſſed Servants. And we can have nothing to expect but the Puniſhment due to ſuch Servants, as hypocritically pretend to ſerve, while they diſhonour and diſobey, their Maſter. Little will

it

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it avail us to take Refuge at laſt in Sorrow; when, at the Evening, or at Night, our Work is to be examined; and the Enquiry to be made, what we have done in that Service which we have undertaken. If we appeal to this *Parable*; that ſhews forth no Reward, but for ſuch as have actually worked in the Service of their Maſter, from the time of their admiſſion into the Vineyard, to the time of their being removed out of it: and this will adminiſter but little Comfort to any, who have ſpent the time due to their Maſter, in the Service of his greateſt Enemy. And the mere pretending to be his Diſciple, or Servant, will be ſo far from leſſening, that it muſt increaſe, the Guilt.

IN the *Chapter* following This which I am now conſidering, at the 28th Verſe, our Lord propoſeth the following Caſe to the *Jews*. *A certain Man had two Sons, and He came to the firſt and ſaid, Son, go work to Day in my Vineyard. He anſwered and ſaid, I will not. But afterward He repented, and went. And He came to the ſecond, and ſaid likewiſe. And He anſwered*

anſwered and ſaid, I go, Sir, and went not. Whether of them twain did the Will of his Father? They ſay unto Him, the Firſt. He propoſeth this, to let them know that it was not the Profeſſion of being his Children, and his People; not the *calling Him, Lord, Lord,* that would ſatisfy Almighty God; but the doing his Will; and that the profeſſing to do it, did but aggravate the Fault of not ſincerely anſwering that Profeſſion. He goes on to tell them, that thoſe very *Harlots* and *Publicans*, who, though before at a diſtance from all pretenſes to ſerve God, yet repented, and were converted by the Preaching of *John* the *Baptiſt*, would *go into the Kingdom of God*, and be accepted to his Favour, long before ſuch as *They* were; who, making great Profeſſions of belonging to God, and being his People, yet, were ſcandalouſly deficient in performing his Will, and conſtantly employed in provoking Him by their Diſobedience. This is the meaning of thoſe Words; and what follow. *Verily, I ſay unto you, that the Publicans, and the Harlots, go into the Kingdom of God before you.* SERM. XVIII.

Not

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Not that any, continuing ſuch Sinners, could ever arrive at Happineſs: but, as it follows, that ſuch Sinners, repenting at the Preaching of *John* the *Baptiſt*, and reforming their Lives; even the vile *Publicans*, ſo much deteſted by the *Jews*, ſhould be vaſtly preferr'd before them, with all their Profeſſions, and all their Proteſtations.

THE *Vineyard*, therefore, is not a place of Oſtentation; but of Work: not framed to feed and ſupport the Idle; but to employ the Diligent: not made to adorn, and defend, all thoſe that enter it; but to be adorned, and defended, by thoſe who pretend to come into it. The very Notion of it is, that it wants their Help, and Cultivation. This is what the great Maſter of it expects. This is what he hires his Labourers for. If, therefore, the Reward be ſo great, and ſo certain, for all, who enter as ſoon as they are invited; and ſincerely labour as ſoon as they are enter'd: how great, and how certain, muſt be the Puniſhment of thoſe who act the Reverſe of this; who enter indeed, with a Profeſſion of working, but baſely deſert the Cauſe, and proſtitute

ſtitute the Honour, and diſregard the Commands of that great Maſter who called and invited them to his Service. SERM. XVIII.

So that, from this *Parable* it is impoſſible to collect any thing to ſooth profeſſed Chriſtians in their hopes of being accepted without a Life of Holineſs and Virtue: nay, it is impoſſible, one would think, not to ſee that the very deſign and intent of it, ſuppoſing it to reſpect particular Perſons, muſt be to ſhew that it is indiſpenſably required of all, at what time ſoever they are called to the Knowledge of God and his Goſpel, to obey that Call; and conſcientiouſly to employ the time allowed them, after this, in the good Works which God hath marked out to them in his Law. Far be it, therefore, from any Chriſtian, who hath long ago enter'd into God's Vineyard, to argue himſelf, from this part of the Goſpel, into any ſhadow of Hope, whilſt He is in a ſtate of ſupine Neglect of his duty, or wilful Diſobedience to God.

And if we look into any other of thoſe *Parables*, by which our Lord repreſents the Proceedings of Almighty God with his Ser-

vants;

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vants; we ſhall find the plaineſt Diſcouragement to all ſuch Hopes. When He repreſents Him as a Maſter, intruſting ſeveral ſorts of Talents to ſeveral Servants, *Matth.* xxv. 14. we find that He certainly expects an actual Improvement of thoſe *Talents*; not only, that they ſhould not be made uſe of againſt his Honour and Intereſt, but that they ſhould not be buried, and rendred uſeleſs: And accordingly, that, when one of thoſe Servants appears to his Lord to have buried what was intruſted to Him, that He might be ſure to reſtore it whole at his return; the Sentence is, *Caſt ye the unprofitable Servant into outer Darkneſs: there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* See from hence what Almighty God certainly expects from thoſe who are called to his Knowledge, and his Service. Nor could all the Sorrow of that Servant, at his *Maſter*'s return, atone, or compenſate, for his paſt ill Conduct.

IN the 21ſt *Chapter* God is repreſented as *letting out his Vineyard to Husbandmen*, who abuſed his Mercy; and, at laſt, as *deſtroying them, and letting out his Vineyard*

to

to others who ſhould render him the Fruits in their Seaſons. In another *Parable*, chap. xviii. at the end, He is repreſented, as *delivering over to the Tormentors*, a Servant, only for being unmerciful, and implacable, towards his Fellow-Servant. Doth all this look, as if he would accept of any thing, at laſt, at the Hands of thoſe who are called into his Service, inſtead of an hearty and ſincere Obedience; or, as if He did not lay a Duty, an indiſpenſable Duty, upon them: the Duty of reforming whatever is amiſs in themſelves; and of flouriſhing in all thoſe good Fruits, and good Works, which are well-pleaſing in his Eyes?

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AND thus have I done what I deſigned: And, as I hope, have, in this, and ſeveral other Diſcourſes, effectually ſhewn the great Weakneſs, and Folly, of a Chriſtian's relying upon any thing for Salvation, but the actual Reformation, and Amendment, of what he knows to be ſinful in himſelf.

I CAN at preſent think but of one thing more that remains to be touched upon, before we leave this Subject. There are ſome Chriſtians, I am ſenſible, who are truly convinced

SERM. XVIII. convinced that this is a juſt Account of the Matter; that their only Hopes muſt be in the actual amendment of their Lives, and practice of Virtue, whilſt God gives them opportunity; and that all other Hopes are vain and deluding: and are therefore reſolved to reform what is bad in themſelves. But then, they deferr this great Work; they are unwilling to do it immediately: but hope that what they deſign may be as well performed ſome time hereafter. They place not their Hopes in any thing but Amendment: but they put off this Amendment till another Seaſon. A few Conſiderations will ſhew us the extreme Hazard, and Folly, of ſuch a Proceeding. For,

1. SUPPOSING that they are taken away before they have put this Reſolution into effect; they are, by their own Confeſſion, in a moſt deplorable, inexcuſable, Condition: being removed from hence, in a State, which they themſelves account to be a State condemned by God in his Goſpel. It is the Amendment of their Lives which, they know, He requires; and the reſolution of Amendment, is not Amendment. Nay,

Nay, indeed, it will be ſo far from helping them, upon this Suppoſition; that it will aggravate their Guilt and their Puniſhment, that they have not actually done what they knew to be their indiſpenſable Duty to do. And who knows when his laſt Hour may come? Is this State, a State of Certainty, and Duration? *In the midſt of Life, are we not in Death?* Do we not ſee, every day, Perſons as likely, nay, more likely than ourſelves, to continue here, called to give account of their Lives? What is it then we can hope for? or how can we think it conſiſtent with the loweſt Degree of Prudence, to delay that which we know not whether we can ever have an opportunity to perform, unleſs we lay hold on the preſent? But, SERM. XVIII.

2. WHAT is it that can induce Men to delay this great, and neceſſary Work? Is it the difficulty of it at preſent? Alaſs! *that* will be ſo far from being diminiſhed, that it will be increaſed, by time. Every Step we take, in moſt of the Vices, renders the attempt of Reformation ſo much the more difficult. As we grow old, evil

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Habits grow old upon us. Cuſtom becomes like Nature it ſelf; not to be put off, or broken through, but with a difficulty which we become willing at laſt to think inſuperable. This made the *Prophet* cry out, *Can the Ethiopian change his Skin, or the Leopard his Spots? then ſhall ye alſo, that are accuſtomed to do evil, learn to do well.* He thought it ſuch a difficulty, as, in the figurative Style, might be repreſented by Matters utterly impoſſible. Certainly, to delay an important Matter; a Buſineſs neceſſary to be performed, becauſe it is difficult; when every Moment, that it is delayed, will add to the difficulty of it; is to put it more out of our Power than it is at preſent: It is to render our Work more difficult, becauſe it is difficult already; which is the moſt inexcuſable Weakneſs.

OR, Is it that Men hope that Time, and Years, will naturally wear out their Inclinations to Sin; and that then they ſhall find it a much more eaſy Matter to live as they ought? Alaſs! Time, and Years, bring an inclination to ſome Vices along with them, againſt

againſt which we ſhall find enough to do to guard our ſelves; and preſent us with Evils, under which alone we ſhall have enough to do to ſupport our ſelves: and to ſome former Vices they add a Strength, and Force, which they had not before. Nay, What one ill Temper, or bad Inclination, or Paſſion, is ever known to be removed, or totally cured, by Years; after an Indulgence hath been given to it through the former Courſe of Life? It is the Mind, that is the Seat of Vice: and if *that* remain corrupt and vitiated, the Man is ſtill corrupt and vicious in the Eyes of God; how much ſoever his outward Appearance may be altered in other reſpects. SERM. XVIII.

BUT could it be ſo, that Age and Years would certainly remove all that Viciouſneſs, which Cuſtom had been breeding: yet how little likelihood, as I obſerved before, is there of arriving at ſuch a Term of Years? And how much more likelihood is there of the contrary? And if we ſhould; and that ſhould be the Caſe: yet how would all the Beauty and Reward of Virtue be gone? What a Return would it be to Almighty

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God, for all his Long-ſuffering, to preſent him at laſt with a Heart dead to all the Purpoſes of Life; render'd uſeleſs, and inſignificant by old Age? What an Affront to Him, to have ſpent all the beſt part of Life in the Service of his Enemy; and then to come and offer Him a Service that hath nothing in it: or, to profeſs to ſerve Him, when we are paſt the time in which it can be acceptable to Him? Is it Virtue, for Creatures in a State of Probation, to leave off Vices, which they cannot retain? to forſake Cuſtoms, which they cannot follow? To pretend to relinquiſh Habits, which have relinquiſh'd them? For, in truth, this is the Caſe, upon the preſent Suppoſition. They deſign to ſerve God with the Dregs of Life; They leave not their Vices, but their Vices leave them; They abandon not their Sins, but their Sins have abandoned them.

TRY, therefore, how ſuch an Offer, and ſuch a Dedication of your ſelves to God, after a multitude of Years ſpent in the hearty Service of his Adverſary, will ſound. Suppoſe your ſelves in his Preſence, addreſſing to Him in this manner. "Lord!

" Lord! We have indeed ſpent the Vigour " of our whole Life, in the Service of Sin; " in diſhonouring Thee; and in neglecting " thy Religion. The time is now come, " when we can ſin no longer, when our " Vices have abandoned us; and Human So- " ciety hath as it were excluded us. Behold! " now, that we cannot well do any thing elſe, " we offer to Thee our Services, which are " without Vigour or Force; and preſent to " Thee the Dregs of Life, and the Refuſe of " all our Years." This is what every Man muſt in effect ſay, that puts off his Amendment till Old-age; upon ſuppoſition that He ſhall arrive at it; and that then He ſhall be able, and willing, to ſin no longer. And if there cannot be a greater Affront imagined, than ſuch an Offer; and if it be the greateſt Shame even to think of ſuch a Return to God as this: let not any Conſideration in the World move any of us to defer ſo indiſpenſable a Duty to a time ſo improper, and ſo utterly unfit for it.

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See Archbiſhop Tillotſon's *Sermon concerning the Advantages of Early Piety.*

LET us conſider what hath been ſaid; that our Days are uncertain; and, therefore, that 'tis Madneſs to put off, even for one

SERM. XVIII. one Day, that Work which is certainly neceſſary; that if we ſhould have more time allowed us, yet our Buſineſs of Amendment would grow more and more difficult every Day; that the preſent time is that in which it is moſt eaſy, and moſt likely, to be effected; and that if we could ſuppoſe any ſuch time to be coming to us in this State, in which our Vices will forſake us whether we will or no, we muſt not expect that this ſhall be accounted our Virtue, and reckoned to us for Reward, any more than our ceaſing to ſin, when we are laid in our Graves: or that God will accept the Preſent of our Service, when all our paſt Health and Life have been wilfully ſpent in the Proſecution of our Luſts; and we now offer it to Him, becauſe we know not what elſe to do with it.

WHAT remains, therefore, but that we immediately ſet about that Work, which cannot be too ſoon begun; nor too ſoon finiſhed? A Work ſo neceſſary, that it is impoſſible to be happy without it? that nothing delude us into a Delay, in a Caſe in which the leaſt Delay may be our Ruine? That

That no Pretenſe, of what ſort ſoever, divert us from the entring into the Paths of that Holineſs, *without which no Man ſhall ſee the Lord?* Nothing but this can give us Peace of Conſcience here: nothing but this can aſſure us of the leaſt Degree of Happineſs hereafter. And God grant that this may be the Effect of what hath been ſaid; for Jeſus Chriſt's ſake our Lord! *To whom, with the Father, and holy Spirit, be all Glory now, and for evermore. Amen!* SERM. XVIII.

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